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THE NATURE, POWER, DECEIT, AND PREVALENCY OF INDWELLING SIN IN BELIEVERS:

TOGETHER WITH

THE WAYS OF ITS WORKING, AND MEANS OF PREVENTION,

OPENED, EVINCED AND APPLIED.

WITH

A RESOLUTION OF SUNDRY CASES OF CONSCIENCE THEREUNTO APPERTAINING.

BY JOHN OWEN, D. D.

A NEW EDITION,
CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. vii. 24, 25.

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M, DCC, XCIII.

REJECTED

PREFACE.

THAT the doctrine of Original Sin, is one of the fundamental truths of our Chriſtian profeſſion, hath been always owned in the church of God. And an eſpecial part it is of that peculiar profeſſion of truth, which they enjoy whoſe religion towards God is built upon, and reſolved into, Divine Revelation. As the world by its wiſdom never knew God aright, ſo the wiſe men of it were always utterly ignorant of this inbred evil in themſelves and others. With us, the doctrine and conviction of it, lie in the very foundation of all wherein we have to do with God, in reference unto our pleaſing of him here, or obtaining the enjoyment of him hereafter. It is alſo known, what influence it hath into the great truths concerning the Perſon of Chriſt, his mediation, the fruits and effects of it, with all the benefits that we are made partakers of thereby. Without a ſuppoſition of it, not any of them can be truly known, or ſavingly believed. For this cauſe it hath been largely treated of by many holy and learned

men, both of old and of latter days. Some have laboured in the diſcovery of its nature, ſome of its guilt and demerit; by whom alſo the truth concerning it, hath been vindicated from the oppoſition made unto it, in the paſt and preſent ages. By moſt, theſe things have been conſidered in their full extent and latitude, with reſpect unto all men by nature, with the eſtate and condition of them who are wholly under the power and guilt of it. How, thereby, men, are diſenabled and incapacitated in themſelves, to anſwer the obedience required, either in the law, or the goſpel, ſo as to free themſelves from the curſe of the one, or to make themſelves partakers of the bleſſing of the other, hath been, by many, alſo fully evinced. Moreover, that there are remainders of it abiding in believers, after their regeneration and converſion to God, as the ſcripture abundantly teſtifies, ſo it hath been fully taught and confirmed; as alſo how the guilt of it is pardoned unto them, and by what means the power of it is weakened in them. All theſe things, I ſay, have been largely treated on, to the great benefit and edification of the church. In what we have now in deſign, we therefore take them all for granted, and endeavour only farther to carry on the diſcovery of it, in its actings and oppoſitions to the law and grace of God in believers. Neither do I intend the diſcuſſing of any thing that hath been controverted about it. What the ſcripture plainly revealeth, and

teacheth concerning it, what believers evidently find by experience in themſelves, what they may learn from the examples and acknowledgements of others, ſhall be repreſented, in a way ſuited unto the capacity of the meaneſt and weakeſt, who is concerned therein. And many things ſeem to render the handling of it, at this ſeaſon, not unneceſſary. The effects and fruits of it, which we ſee, in the apoſtaſies and backſlidings of many, the ſcandalous ſins and miſcarriages of ſome, and the courſe and lives of the moſt, ſeem to call for a due conſideration of it. Beſides, of how great concernment, a full and clear acquaintance with the power of this indwelling ſin (the matter deſigned to be opened) is unto believers, to ſtir them up to watchfulneſs and diligence, to faith and prayer, to call them to repentance, humility, and ſelf-abaſement, will appear in our progreſs. Theſe, in general, were the ends aimed at in the enſuing diſcourſe; which, being at firſt compoſed and delivered for the uſe and benefit of a few, is now, by the providence of God, made public. And if the reader receive any advantage by theſe weak endeavours, let him know that it is his duty, as to give glory unto God, ſo to help them by his prayers, who, in many temptations and afflictions, are willing to labour in the vineyard of the Lord, unto which work they are called.

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OF

INDWELLING SIN, &c.

CHAP. I.

Indwelling ſin in believers, treated of by the apoſtle, Rom. vii. 21. *(The place explained.)*

IT is of indwelling ſin, and that in the remainders of it in perſons after their converſion to God, with its power, efficacy and effects, that we intend to treat. This alſo is the great deſign of the apoſtle, to manifeſt and evince, in chap. vii. of the epiſtle to the Romans. Many indeed are the conteſts about the principal ſcope of the apoſtle in that chapter, and in what ſtate the perſon is, under the law, or under grace, whoſe condition he expreſſeth therein. I ſhall not at preſent enter into that diſpute, but take that for granted which may be undeniably proved and evinced; namely, that it is the condition of a regenerate perſon, with reſpect unto the remaining power of indwelling ſin, which is there propoſed, and exemplified by, and in, the perſon of the apoſtle himſelf. In that diſcourſe therefore of his, ſhall the foundation be laid of what we have to offer upon this ſubject. Not that I ſhall proceed in an expoſition of his revelation of this truth, as it lies in

its own contexture, but only make uſe of what is delivered by him, as occaſion ſhall offer itſelf. And here firſt occurreth, that which he affirms, ver 21. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me."

There are four things obſervable in theſe words.

Firſt, The appellation he gives unto indwelling ſin, whereby he expreſſeth its power and efficacy, it is a *law*. For that which he terms a *law*, in this verſe, he calls in the foregoing, "ſin that dwelleth in him."

Secondly, The way whereby he came to the diſcovery of this *law*, not abſolutely, and in its own nature, but in himſelf, he *found* it; "I find a law."

Thirdly, The frame of his ſoul and inward man with this law of ſin, and under its diſcovery, "he would do good."

Fourthly, The ſtate and activity of this *law* when the ſoul is in that frame, when it would do good, "it is preſent with him." For what ends and purpoſes we ſhall ſhew afterwards.

The firſt thing obſervable is the application here uſed by the apoſtle, he calls indwelling ſin a *law*; It is a law.

A law is taken either, properly, for a *directive rule*, or improperly, for an *operative effective principle*, which ſeems to have the force of a law. In its firſt ſenſe, it is a moral rule which directs and commands, and ſundry ways moves and regulates the mind and the will, as to the things which it requires, or forbids. This is evidently the general nature and work of a law. Some things it commands, ſome things it forbids, with rewards and penalties, which move and impel men to do the one and avoid the other. Hence in a ſecondary ſenſe, an inward principle that moves and inclines conſtantly unto any actions, is called a *law*. The principle that is in the *nature* of every thing, moving

and carrying it towards its own end and reſt, is called the *law of nature*. In this reſpect every inward principle that inclineth and urgeth unto operations or actings ſuitable to itſelf, is a *law*. So Rom. viii. 2. The powerful and effectual working of the ſpirit and grace of Chriſt in the hearts of believers, is called "the whole ſpirit of life." And for this reaſon doth the apoſtle here call indwelling ſin a law. It is a powerful and effectual indwelling principle, inclining and preſſing unto actions agreeable and ſuitable unto its nature. This and no other is the intention of the apoſtle in this expreſſion. For although that term, a *law*, may ſometimes intend a *ſtate* and *condition*, and if here ſo uſed, the meaning of the words would be, 'I find that this is my *condition*, this is the *ſtate* of things with me, that when I would do good evil is preſent with me,' which makes no great alteration in the principal intendment of the place; yet properly it can denote nothing here, but the chief *ſubject* treated of. For although the name of a *law* be variouſly uſed by the apoſtle in this chapter; yet when it relates unto *ſin*, it is no where applied by him to the condition of the perſon, but only to expreſs either the nature, or the power, of ſin itſelf: ſo ver. 23, "I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of ſin, which is in my members." That which he here calls the *law of his mind*, from the principal ſubject and ſeat of it, is in itſelf no other but the "law of the ſpirit of life" which is in Chriſt Jeſus, chap. viii. 2. Or the effectual power of the ſpirit of grace, as was ſaid. But the *law*, as applied unto *ſin*, hath a double ſenſe; for as in the firſt place, "I ſaw a law in my members," it denotes the being and nature of ſin; ſo in the latter, "leading into captivity to

the law of ſin which is in my members," it ſignifies its power and efficacy. And both theſe are compriſed in the ſame name ſingly uſed, ver. 20. Now that which we obſerve from this *name*, or term of a *law* attributed unto ſin, is, that there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling ſin in believers, with a conſtant working towards evil.

Thus it is in believers, it is a law even *in them*, though not *to them*. Though its rule be broken its ſtrength weakened and impaired, its root mortified, yet it is a *law* ſtill of great force and efficacy. There where it is leaſt felt, it is moſt powerful. Carnal men in reference unto ſpiritual and moral duties, are nothing but this law, they do nothing but from it, and by it. It is in them a ruling and prevailing principle of all *moral* actions, with reference unto a ſupernatural and eternal end. I ſhall not conſider it in them in whom it hath moſt power, but in them in whom its power is chiefly diſcovered and diſcerned, that is in believers; in the others only in order to the farther conviction and manifeſtation thereof.

Secondly, The apoſtle propoſeth the way whereby he diſcovered this law in himſelf, I find then, or therefore a *law*. He found it; it had been told him there was ſuch a law, it had been preached unto him. This convinced him, that there was a *law of ſin*. But it is one thing for a man to know in general, that there is a law of ſin, another thing for a man to have an experience of the power of this law of ſin in himſelf. It is preached to all; all men that own the ſcripture acknowledge it, as being declared therein; but they are but few that know it in themſelves, we ſhould elſe have more complaints of it than we have, and more contendings againſt it, and leſs fruits of it in the world. But this is that which the apoſtle

affirms; not that the *doctrine* of it had been preached unto him, but that he found it by experience in himself. "I find a law;" I have experience of its power and efficacy. For a man to find his ſickneſs and danger thereon from its effects, is another thing than to hear a diſcourſe about a diſeaſe from its cauſes. And this experience is the great preſervative of all divine truths in the ſoul. This it is to know a thing indeed, in reality, to know it for ourſelves, when, as we are taught it from the word, ſo we find it in ourſelves. Hence we obſerve.

Further, Believers have experience of the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin. They *find* it in themſelves, they *find* it as a law. It hath a ſelf evidencing efficacy to them that are *alive* to diſcern it: they that find not its power, are under its dominion. Whoſoever contends againſt it, ſhall know and find, that it is preſent with them, that it is powerful in them. He ſhall find the *ſtream* to be ſtrong, who ſwims againſt it, though he who rolls along with it, be inſenſible of it.

Thirdly, The general frame of believers notwithſtanding the inhabitation of this law of ſin, is here alſo expreſſed. "They would do good." This law is preſent. The habitual inclination of their will is unto good. This law *in* them, is not a law unto them, as it is to unbelievers. They are not wholly obnoxious to its power, nor morally unto its commands. Grace hath the ſovereignty in their ſouls; this gives them a will unto good; they would do good, that is always, and conſtantly, 1 John iii. 9. *to commit ſin*, is to make a trade of ſin, to make it a man's buſineſs to ſin; ſo it is ſaid, a believer doth "not commit ſin." And ſo to do that which is good; to will to do ſo, is to have the *habitual* bent and inclination of the will ſet on that which is good, that is morally and ſpiritually

good, which is the proper ſubject treated of; whence is our third obſervation,

There is, and there is through grace kept up in believers, a conſtant and ordinarily prevailing will of doing good, notwithſtanding the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin to the contrary.

This, in their *worſt* condition, diſtinguiſheth them from unbelievers in their *beſt*. The *will* in unbelievers is under the power of the law of ſin. The oppoſition they make to ſin; either in the root, or branches of it, is from their light, and their conſciences; the *will of ſinning* in them is never taken away. Take away all other conſiderations and hindrances, whereof we ſhall treat afterwards, and they would ſin willingly always. Their faint endeavours to anſwer their convictions, are far from *a will of doing that which is good*. They will plead indeed, that they would leave their ſins if they could, and they would fain do better than they do. But it is the *working* of their light and convictions, not any ſpiritual inclination of their wills, which they intend by that expreſſion. For, where there is a will of doing good, there is a choice of that which is good for it's own excellency ſake, becauſe it is deſirable and ſuitable to the ſoul and therefore to be preferred before that which is contrary. Now this is not in any unbelievers; they do not, they cannot ſo chuſe that which is ſpiritually good, nor is it ſo excellent or ſuitable unto any principle that is in them: only they have ſome deſires to attain that end, whereunto that which is good doth lead, and to avoid that evil which the neglect of it tends unto. And theſe alſo are for the moſt part ſo weak and languid in many of them, that they put them not upon any conſiderable endeavours; witneſs that luxury, ſloth, worldlineſs and ſecurity, that the generality of men are even drowned in. But in believers

there is a will of doing good, an habitual diſpoſition and inclination in their wills unto that which is ſpiritually good. And where this is, it is accompanied with anſwerable effects. The will is the principle of our moral actions, and therefore unto the prevailing diſpoſition thereof, will the general courſe of our actings be ſuited. Good things will proceed from the good treaſures of the heart. Nor can this diſpoſition be evidenced to be in any but by its fruits. A will of doing good, without doing good, is but pretended.

Fourthly, There is yet another thing remaining in theſe words of the apoſtle, ariſing from that reſpect that the preſence of ſin hath unto the time and ſeaſon of duty: "when I would do (good ſaith he) evil is preſent with me."

There are two things to be conſidered in the will of doing good, that is in believers.

Firſt, There is its habitual reſidence in them. They have always an habitual inclination of will unto that which is good. And this habitual preparation for good is always preſent with them, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, verſe 18 of this chapter.

Secondly, There are ſpecial times and ſeaſons for the exerciſe of that principle. There is a "When I would do good," a ſeaſon wherein this or that good, this or that duty, is to be performed and accompliſhed, ſuitably unto the habitual preparation and inclination of the will.

Unto theſe two, there are two things in indwelling ſin oppoſed. To the gracious principle reſiding in the will, inclining unto that which is ſpiritually good, it is oppoſed as it is a law, that is a contrary principle, inclining unto evil, with an averſation from that which is good Unto the ſecond, or the actual willing of this or that good in particular, unto this, "when I would do good," is oppoſed the preſence of this law, "evil is preſent

with me," evil is at hand and ready to oppoſe the actual accompliſhment of the good aimed at. Whence,

Fourthly, Indwelling ſin is effectually operative in rebelling and inclining to evil, when the will of doing good is in a particular manner active, and inclining unto obedience.

And this is the deſcription of him who is a believer, and a ſinner, as every one who is the former, he is the latter alſo. Theſe are the contrary principles, and the contrary operations that are in him. The principles are, a will of doing good on the one hand, from grace, and a law of ſin on the other. Their adverſe actings and operations are inſinuated in thoſe expreſſions, "when I would do good, evil is preſent with me." And theſe both are more fully expreſſed by the apoſtle, Gal. v. 17. "For the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other; ſo that I cannot do theſe things that I would."

And here lie the ſprings of the whole courſe of our obedience. An acquaintance with theſe ſeveral principles, and their actings, is the principal part of our wiſdom. They are, upon the matter, next to the free grace of God in our juſtification by the blood of Chriſt, the only things wherein the glory of God and our own ſouls are concerned. Theſe are the ſprings of our holineſs, and our ſins, of our joys and troubles, of our refreſhments and ſorrows. It is then all our concernments to be thoroughly acquainted with theſe things, who intend to walk with God, or to glorify him in this world.

And hence we may ſee what wiſdom is required in, the guiding and management of our hearts and ways before God. Where the ſubjects of a ruler are in fewds and oppoſitions one againſt another,

unleſs great wiſdom be uſed in the government of the whole, all things will quickly be ruinous in that ſtate. There are theſe contrary principles in the hearts of believers, and if they labour not to be ſpiritually wiſe, how ſhall they be able to ſteer their courſe again? Many men live in the dark to themſelves all their days; whatever elſe they know, they know not themſelves. They know their outward eſtates, how rich they are, and the condition of their bodies, as to health and ſickneſs, they are careful to examine; but as to their inward man, and their principles as to God and eternity, they know little or nothing of themſelves. Indeed few labour to grow wiſe in this matter, few ſtudy themſelves as they ought, are acquainted with the evil of their own hearts as they ought, on which yet the whole courſe of their obedience, and conſequently of their eternal condition, doth depend. This therefore is our wiſdom, and it is a needful wiſdom, if we have any deſign to pleaſe God, or to avoid that which is a provocation to the eyes of his glory.

We ſhall find alſo in our inquiry hereinto, what diligence and watchfulneſs is required unto a chriſtian converſation. There is a conſtant enemy unto it in every one's own heart: and what an enemy it is we ſhall afterwards ſhow, for this is our deſign to diſcover him to the uttermoſt. In the mean time we may well bewail the woful ſloth and negligence that is in the moſt, even of profeſſors. They live and walk as though they intended to go to heaven hood-winkt, and aſleep, as though they had no enemy to deal withal. Their miſtake therefore and folly will be fully laid open in our progreſs.

That which I ſhall principally fix upon, in reference unto our preſent deſign, from this place of the apoſtle, is that which was firſt laid down,

namely, that, "there is an exceeding efficacy and power in the remainder of indwelling ſin in believers, with a conſtant inclination and working towards evil."

Awake therefore, all of you in whoſe hearts are any thing of the ways of God. Your enemy is not only upon you, as on Sampſon of old, but is in you alſo. He is at work by all ways of force and craft, as we ſhall ſee. Would you not diſhonour God and his goſpel? would you not ſcandalize the ſaints and ways of God? would you not wound your conſciences, and endanger your ſouls? would you not grieve the good and holy Spirit of God, the Author of all your comforts? would you keep your garments undefiled, and eſcape the woeful temptations and pollutions of the days wherein we live? would you be preſerved from the number of the apoſtates in theſe latter days? awake to the conſideration of this curſed enemy, which is the ſpring of all theſe and innumerable other evils, as alſo of the ruin of all the ſouls that periſh in this world.

CHAP. II.

Indwelling ſin a law. In what ſenſe it is ſo called. What kind of law it is. An inward effective principle called a law. The power of ſin thence evinced.

THAT which we have propoſed unto conſideration is the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin. The ways whereby it may be evinced are many. I ſhall begin with the appellation of

it in the place before mentioned, it is a law; "I find a law," ſaith the apoſtle. It is becauſe of its power and efficacy that it is ſo called; ſo is alſo the principle of grace in believers the "law of the ſpirit of life," as we obſerved before, Rom. viii. 3. "which is the exceeding greatneſs of the power of God in them," Epheſ. i. 19. Where there is a law, there is power.

We ſhall therefore ſhew both what belongs unto it, as it is a law in general, and alſo what is peculiar or proper in it, as being ſuch a law as we have deſcribed.

There are in general two things attending every law, as ſuch.

Firſt, Dominion, Rom. vii. 1. "The law hath dominion over a man whilſt he liveth;" it lordeth it over a man. Where any law takes place, it hath dominion. It is properly the acts of a ſuperior, and it belongs to its nature to exact obedience by way of dominion. Now there is a two-fold dominion, as there is a two-fold law. There is a moral authoritative dominion over a man, and there is a real effective dominion in a man. The firſt is an affection of the law of God, the latter of the law of ſin. The law of ſin hath not in itſelf a moral dominion, it hath not a rightful dominion or authority over any man, but it hath that which is equivalent unto it; whence it is ſaid to reign as a king, Rom. vi. 12. and to Lord it, or have dominion, ver. 14. as a law in general is ſaid to have, chap. vii. 1. But becauſe it hath loſt its complete dominion, in reference unto believers, of whom alone we ſpeak, I ſhall not inſiſt upon it in this utmoſt extent of its power. But even in them it is a law ſtill, though not a law unto them; yet as was ſaid, it is a law in them. And though it have not a complete, and as it were a rightful, dominion over them, yet it will have a

domination as to ſome things in them. It is ſtill a law, and that in them, ſo that all its actings are the actings of a law; that is, it acts with power, though it have loſt its complete power of ruling in them. Though it be weakened, yet its nature is not changed. It is a law ſtill, and therefore powerful. And as its particular workings (which we ſhall afterwards conſider) are the ground of this appellation, ſo the term itſelf teacheth us in general what we are to expect from it, and what endeavours it will uſe for dominion, to which it hath been accuſtomed.

Secondly, A law, as a law, hath an efficacy to provoke thoſe that are obnoxious unto it unto the things that it requireth. A law hath rewards and puniſhments accompanying of it. Theſe ſecretly prevail on them to whom they are propoſed, though the things commanded be not much deſirable. And generally all laws have their efficacy on the minds of men, from the rewards and puniſhments that are annexed unto them. Nor is this law without this ſpring of power: it hath its rewards and puniſhments.

The pleaſures of ſin are the rewards of ſin; a reward that moſt men loſe their ſouls to obtain. By this the law of ſin, contended in Moſes againſt the law of grace, Heb. xi. 25, 26. "He choſe rather to ſuffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon; for he looked unto the recompenſe of reward." The conteſt was in his mind between the law of ſin, and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of ſin wherewith it ſought to draw him over, and wherewith it prevails on the moſt, was the reward that it propoſed unto him, namely that he ſhould have the preſent enjoyment of the pleaſures of ſin. By this is contended againſt the

reward annexed unto the law of grace, called the recompenſe of reward.

By this ſorry reward doth this law keep the world in obedience to its commands. And experience ſhews us, what power it is to influence the minds of men. It hath alſo puniſhments that it threatens men with, who labour to caſt off its yoke. Whatever evil, trouble, or danger, in the world, attends goſpel obedience; whatever hardſhip or violence is to be offered to the ſenſual part of our natures, in a ſtrict courſe of mortification, ſin makes uſe of as if they were puniſhments attending the neglect of its commands. By theſe it prevails on the fearful, who ſhall have no ſhare in life eternal, Rev. xxi. 8. And it is hard to ſay by whether of theſe its pretended rewards, or pretended puniſhments, it doth moſt prevail, in whether of them its greateſt ſtrength doth lie. By its rewards it inticeth men to ſins of commiſſion, as they are called, in ways and actions tending to the ſatisfaction of its luſts. By its puniſhments it induceth men to the omitting of duties, a courſe tending to no leſs a pernicious event than the former. By which of theſe the law of ſin hath its greateſt ſucceſs in and upon the ſouls of men is not evident, and that becauſe they are ſeldom or never ſeparated but equally take place on the ſame perſons. But this is certain, that by tenders and promiſes of the pleaſures of ſin on the one hand, by threats of the deprivation of all ſenſual contentments, and the infliction of temporal evils on the other, it hath an exceeding efficacy on the minds of men, oftentimes of believers themſelves. Unleſs a man be prepared to reject the reaſonings that will offer themſelves from the one and the other of theſe, there is no ſtanding before the power of this law. The world falls before them every day. With what deceit and violence they are urged and im-

poſed on the minds of men, we ſhall afterwards declare ; as alſo what advantages they have to prevail upon them. Look on the generality of men, and you ſhall find them wholly by theſe means at ſin's diſpoſal. Do the profits and pleaſures of ſin lie before them, nothing can withhold them from reaching after them. Do difficulties and inconveniencies attend the duties of the goſpel, they will have nothing to do with them, and ſo are wholly given up to the rule and dominion of this law.

And this light in general we have into the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin from the general nature of a law, whereof it is partaker.

We may conſider next, what kind of law in particular it is, which will farther evidence that power of it which we are inquiring after. It is not an outward, written, comanding, directing law, but an inbred, working, impelling, urging law. A law propoſed unto us, is not to be compared for efficacy to a law inbred in us. Adam had a law of ſin propoſed to him in his temptation, but becauſe he had no law of ſin inbred and working in him, he might have withſtood it. An inbred law muſt needs be effectual. Let us take an example from that law, which is contrary to this law of ſin. The law of God, was at firſt inbred and natural unto man, it was concreated with his faculties, and was their rectitude both in being and operation, in reference to his end of living unto God, and glorifying of him. Hence it had an eſpecial power in the whole ſoul, to enable it unto all obedience, yea, and to make all obedience eaſy and pleaſant. Such is the power of an inbred law. And though this law, as to the rule and dominion of it, be now by nature caſt out of the ſoul, yet the remaining ſparks of it, becauſe they are inbred, are very powerful and effectual, as the apoſtle declares, Rom. ii. 14. 15. Afterwards God re-

news this law, and writes it in tables of ſtone ; but what is the efficacy of this law ; will it now, as it is external, and propoſed unto men, enable them to perform the things that it exacts and requires? not at all. God knew it would not, unleſs it were turned to an internal law again ; that is until of a moral outward rule, it be turned into an inward real principle. Wherefore God makes his law internal again, and implants it on the heart as it was at firſt, when he intends to give it power to produce obedience in all his people, Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33. "I will put my law in their inwards parts, and write it in their hearts." This is that which God fixeth on, as it were upon a diſcovery of the inſufficiency of an outward law leading men unto obedience. The written law, ſaith he, will not do it ; mercies and deliverances from diſtreſs will not effect it ; trials and afflictions will not accompliſh it ; then, ſaith the Lord, will I take another courſe ; I will turn the written law, into an internal living principle in their hearts, and that will have ſuch an efficacy, as ſhall aſſuredly make them my people, and keep them ſo. Now ſuch is this law of ſin, it is an indwelling law, Rom. vii. 17. "It is ſin that dwelleth in me," verſe 20. Sin that dwelleth in me, verſe 21. It is preſent with me, verſe 23. It is in my members ; yea, it is ſo far in a man, as in ſome ſenſe it is ſaid to be the man himſelf, verſe 18. "I know that in me, that is in my fleſh, there dwelleth no good thing." The fleſh, which is the ſeat and throne of this law, yea, which indeed in this law, is in ſome ſenſe the man himſelf, as grace alſo is the new man. Now from this conſideration of it, that it is an indwelling law inclining and moving to ſin, as an inward habit or principle, it hath ſundry advantages increaſing its ſtrength, and furthering its power. As,

First, It aways abides in the ſoul, it is never abſent. The apoſtle twice uſeth that expreſſion, it dwelleth in me. There is its conſtant reſidence and habitation. If it came upon the ſoul only at certain ſeaſons, much obedience might be perfectly accompliſhed in its abſence. Yea, and as they deal with uſurping tyrants, whom they intend to thruſt out of a city, the gates might be ſometimes ſhut againſt it, that it might not return. The ſoul might fortify itſelf againſt it. But the ſoul is its home, there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of ſin is always in you; in the beſt that you do, and in the worſt. Men little conſider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, ſin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houſes, which if it be not looked unto, will fire them, and it may be conſume them. O the woeful ſecurity of poor ſouls! How little do the moſt of men think of this inbred enemy, that is never from home! How little for the moſt part doth the watchfulneſs of any profeſſors anſwer the danger of their ſtate and condition.

Secondly, It is always ready to apply itſelf to every end and purpoſe that it ſerves unto. It doth not only dwell in me, ſaith the apoſtle, "but when I would do good, it is preſent with me:" there is ſomewhat more in that expreſſion, than mere indwelling. An inmate may dwell in an houſe, and yet not be always meddling with what the good man of the houſe hath to do, (that ſo we may keep to the alluſion of indwelling, uſed by the apoſtle.) But it is ſo with this law, it doth ſo dwell in us, as that it will be preſent with us in every thing we do; yea, oftentimes when with moſt earneſtneſs we deſire to be quit of it, with moſt

violence it will put itſelf upon us: "when I would do good, it is preſent with me," Would you pray? would you hear? would you give alms? would you meditate? would you be in any duty acting faith on God, and love towards him? would you work righteouſneſs? would you reſiſt temptations? this troubleſome perplexing indweller will ſtill more or leſs put itſelf upon you, and be preſent with you; ſo that you cannot perfectly and completely accompliſh the thing that is good, as our apoſtle ſpeaks, verſe 18. Sometimes men by hearkening to their temptations, do ſtir up, excite, and provoke their luſt: and no wonder if then they find them preſent and active. But it will be ſo, when with all our endeavours we labour to be free from them. This law of ſin dwells in us, that is, it adheres as a depraved principle unto our minds in darkneſs, and vanity, unto our affections in ſenſuality, unto our wills in a loathing of, and averſation from, that which is good, and by ſome, more, or all of theſe, is continually putting itſelf upon us, in inclinations, motions, or ſuggeſtions to evil, when we would be moſt gladly quit of it.

Thirdly, It being an indwelling law, it applies itſelf to its work with great facility and eaſineſs, like "the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us," Heb. xii. 1. It hath a great facility and eaſineſs in the application of itſelf unto its works; it needs no doors to be opened unto it, it needs no engines to work by. The ſoul cannot apply itſelf to any duty of a man, but it muſt be by the exerciſe of thoſe faculties wherein this law hath its reſidence. Is the underſtanding or the mind to be applied unto any thing? there it is in ignorance, darkneſs, vanity, folly, madneſs. Is the will to be engaged? there it is alſo in ſpiritual deadneſs, ſtubbornneſs, and the roots of obſtinacy. Is the

heart and affections to be ſet on work? there it is in inclinations to the world, and preſent things, and ſenſuality, with proneneſs to all manner of defilements. Hence it is eaſy for it to inſinuate itſelf into all that we do, and to hinder all that is good, and to further all ſin and wickedneſs. It hath an intimacy, an inwardneſs with the ſoul, and therefore in all that we do, doth eaſily beſet us. It poſſeſſeth thoſe very faculties of the ſoul, whereby we muſt do what we do, whatever it be, good or evil. Now all theſe advantages it hath as it is a law, as an indwelling law which manifeſts its power and efficacy. It is always reſident in the ſoul, it puts itſelf upon all its actings, and that with eaſineſs and facility.

This is that law which the apoſtle affirms, that he found in himſelf, this is the title that he gives unto the powerful and effectual remainders of indwelling ſin, even in believers, and theſe general evidences of its power from that appellation have we. Many there are in the world, who find not this law in them, who, whatever they have been taught in the word, have not a ſpiritual ſenſe and experience of the power of indwelling ſin, and that becauſe they are wholly under the dominion of it. They find not that there is darkneſs and folly in their minds, becauſe they are darkneſs itſelf, and darkneſs will diſcover nothing. They find not deadneſs and indiſpoſition in their hearts and wills to God, becauſe they are dead wholly in treſpaſſes and ſins. They are at peace with their luſts, by being in bondage unto them. And this is the ſtate of moſt men in the world, which makes them wofully deſpiſe all their eternal concernments. Whence is it that men follow and purſue the world with ſo much greedineſs, that they neglect heaven, and life, and immortality for it every

day? Whence is it that ſome purſue their ſenſuality with delight? they will drink, and revel, and have their ſports, let others ſay what they pleaſe. Whence is it that ſo many live ſo unprofitably under the word, that they underſtand ſo little of what is ſpoken unto them, that they practiſe leſs of what they underſtand, and will by no means be ſtirred up to anſwer the mind of God in his calls unto them? It is all from this law of ſin, and the power of it that rules and bares ſway in men, that all theſe things do proceed; but it is not ſuch perſons of whom at preſent we particularly treat.

From what hath been ſpoken, it will enſue, that if there be ſuch a law in believers, it is doubtleſs their duty to find it out, to find it ſo to be.

The more they find its power, the leſs they will feel its effects. It will not at all advantage a man to have an hectical diſtemper, and not to diſcover it; a fire lying ſecretly in his houſe, and not to know it. So much as men find of this law in them, ſo much they will abhor it, and themſelves, and no more. Proportionably alſo to their diſcovery of it will be their earneſtneſs for grace; nor will it riſe higher; all watchfulneſs and diligence in obedience will be anſwerable alſo thereunto. Upon this hinge, or finding out, and experiencing the power and the efficacy of this law of ſin, turns the whole courſe of our lives. Ignorance of it breeds ſenſleſſneſs, careleſſneſs, ſloth, ſecurity and pride, all which the Lord's ſoul abhors. Eruptions into great, open, conſcience-waſting, ſcandalous ſins, are from want of a due ſpiritual conſideration of this law. Inquire then how it is with your ſouls; what do you find of this law, what experience have you of its power and efficacy? Do you find it dwelling

in you, always preſent with you, exciting itſelf, or putting forth its poiſon with facility and eaſineſs, at all times, in all your duties, "when you would do good?" What humiliation, what ſelf-abaſement, what intenſeneſs in prayer, what diligence, what watchfulneſs doth this call for at your hands? What ſpiritual wiſdom do you ſtand in need of? What ſupplies of grace, what aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, will be hence alſo diſcovered? I fear we have few of us a diligence proportionable to our danger.

CHAP. III.

The ſeat or ſubject of the law of ſin, the heart. What meant thereby. Properties of the heart as poſſeſſed by ſin; unſearchable; deceitful. Whence that deceit ariſeth. Improvements of theſe conſiderations.

HAVING manifeſted indwelling ſin, whereof we treat, in the remainders of it in believers, to be a law, and evinced in general, the power of it from thence, we ſhall now proceed to give particular inſtances of its efficacy and advantages, from ſome things that generally relate unto it as ſuch. And theſe are three. Firſt, Its ſeat and ſubject: Secondly, Its natural properties: and Thirdly, Its operations, and the manner thereof, which principally we aim at, and ſhall attend unto.

Firſt, For the ſeat and ſubject of this law of ſin, the ſcripture every where aſſigns it to be the heart. There indwelling ſin keeps its eſpecial

reſidence. It hath invaded and poſſeſſed the throne of God himſelf, Eccleſ. ix. 3. "Madneſs is in the heart of men whilſt they live." This their madneſs, or the root of all that madneſs which appears in their lives. Matth. xv. 19. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders adulteries, fornications, thefts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies, &c." There are many outward temptations and provocations that befal men, which excite and ſtir them up unto theſe evils. But they do but as it were, open the veſſel and let out what is laid out and ſtored in it. The root, riſe, and ſpring of all theſe things is in the heart. Temptations and occaſions put nothing into a man, but only draw out what was in him before. Hence is that ſummary deſcription of the whole work and effect of this law of ſin, Gen. vi. 5. "Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually;" ſo alſo, chap. viii. 21. The whole work of the law of ſin, from its firſt riſe, its firſt coining of actual ſin, is here deſcribed; and its ſeat, its work-houſe, is ſaid to be the heart. And ſo it is called by our Saviour, "the evil treaſure of the heart," Luke vi. 45. "An evil man, out of the evil treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." This treaſure is the prevailing principle of moral actions that is in men. So in the beginning of the verſe, our Saviour calls grace the good treaſure of the heart of a good man, whence that which is good doth proceed. It is a principle conſtantly and abundantly inciting and ſtirring up unto and conſequently bringing forth actions conformable, and like unto it, of the ſame kind and nature with itſelf. And it is alſo called a treaſure for its abundance. It will never be exhauſted, it is not waſted by men's ſpending on it: yea, the more laviſh men are of this ſtock, the more they draw

out of this treaſure, the more it grows and abounds: as men do not ſpend their grace, but increaſe it by its exerciſe, no more do they their indwelling ſin. The more men exerciſe their grace in duties of obedience, the more it is ſtrengthened and increaſed. And the more men exert and put forth the fruits of their luſt, the more is that enraged and encreaſed in them. It feeds upon itſelf, ſwallows up its own poiſon, and grows thereby. The more men ſin, the more are they inclined unto ſin. It is from the deceitfulneſs of this law of ſin, whereof we ſhall ſpeak afterwards at large, that men perſuade themſelves, that by this or that particular ſin, they ſhall ſo ſatisfy their luſts, as that they ſhall need to ſin no more. Every ſin increaſeth the principle, and fortifieth the habit of ſinning. It is an evil treaſure that increaſeth by doing evil. And where doth this treaſure lie? It is in the heart, there it is laid up, there it is kept in ſafety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot diſpoſſeſs a man of this treaſure, it is ſo ſafely ſtored in the heart.

The heart in the ſcripture is variouſly uſed. Sometimes for the mind and underſtanding; ſometimes for the will; ſometimes for the affections; ſometimes for the conſcience; ſometimes for the whole ſoul. Generally it denotes the whole ſoul of man, and all the faculties of it, not abſolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil. The mind as it inquireth, diſcerneth, and judgeth what is to be done, what refuſed; the will, as it chuſeth, or refuſeth, and avoids; the affections as they like or diſlike, cleave to, or have an averſation from, that which is propoſed to them. The conſcience as it warns, and determines, are altogether called the heart.

And in this ſenſe it is that we ſay the ſeat and ſubject of this law of ſin is the heart of man. Only we may add, that the ſcripture, ſpeaking of the heart, as the principle of men's good or evil actions, doth uſually inſinuate together with it two things belonging unto the manner of their performance.

Firſt, A ſuitableneſs and pleaſingneſs unto the ſoul in the things that are done. When men take delight, and are pleaſed in and with what they do, they are ſaid to do it heartily with their whole hearts. Thus when God himſelf bleſſeth his people in love and delight, he ſays, he doth it with "his whole heart, and his whole ſoul." Jer. xxxii. 41.

Secondly, Reſolution and conſtancy in ſuch actions. And this alſo is denoted in the metaphorical expreſſion before uſed of a treaſure, from whence men do conſtantly take out the things which either they ſtand in need of, or do intend to uſe.

This is the ſubject, the ſeat, the dwelling-place of this law of ſin. The heart, as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceed good or evil, Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion againſt God all our days. Sometimes it hath more ſtrength, and conſequently more ſucceſs; ſometimes leſs of the one than of the other, but is always in rebellion whilſt we live.

That we may in our paſſage take a little view of the ſtrength and power of ſin from this ſeat and ſubject of it, we may conſider one or two properties of the heart that exceedingly contribute thereunto. It is like an enemy in war, whoſe ſtrength and power, lie not only in his numbers, and force of men or arms, but alſo in the uncon-

querable forts that he doth poſſeſs. And ſuch is the heart to this enemy of God and our ſouls, as will appear from the properties of it, whereof one or two ſhall be mentioned.

Firſt, It is unſearchable. Jer. xvii. 9, 10. "Who can know the heart? I the Lord ſearch it." The heart of man is pervious to God only; hence he takes the honour of ſearching the heart to be as peculiar to himſelf, and as fully declaring him to be God, as any other glorious attribute of his nature. We know not the hearts of one another, we know not our own hearts as we ought. Many there are that know not their hearts as to their general bent and diſpoſition, whether it be good or bad, ſincere and ſound, or corrupt and naught; but no one knoweth all the ſecret intrigues, the windings and turnings, the actings and averſations of his own heart. Hath any one the perfect meaſure of his own light and darkneſs? Can any one know what actings of chuſing or averſation his will will bring forth, upon the propoſal of that endleſs variety of objects that it is to be exerciſed with? Can any one traverſe the various mutability of his affections? Do the ſecret ſprings of acting and refuſing in the ſoul, lie before the eyes of any man? Doth any one know what will be the motions of the mind or will, in ſuch and ſuch conjunctions of things? Such a ſuiting of objects ſuch a pretenſion of reaſonings, ſuch an appearance of things deſirable? All in heaven and earth, but the infinite all-ſeeing God, are utterly ignorant of theſe things. In this unſearchable heart dwells the law of ſin, and much of its ſecurity, and conſequently of its ſtrength, lies in this, that it is paſt our finding out. We fight with an enemy whoſe ſecret ſtrength we cannot diſcover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements.

Hence oftentimes, when we are ready to think ſin quite ruined, after a while we find it was but out of ſight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unſearchable heart, whether we cannot purſue it. The ſoul may perſuade itſelf all is well, when ſin may be ſafe in the hidden darkneſs of the mind, which it is impoſſible that he ſhould look into; for whatever makes manifeſt is light. It may ſuppoſe the will of ſinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unſearchable reſerve for a more ſuitable object, a more vigorous temptation than at preſent it is tried withal. Hath a man had a conteſt with any luſt, and a bleſſed victory over it by the Holy Ghoſt, as to that preſent trial? when he thinks it is utterly expelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired out of ſight. It can lie ſo cloſe in the mind's darkneſs, in the will's indiſpoſition, in the diſorder and carnality of the affections, that no eye can diſcover it. The beſt of our wiſdom is but to watch its firſt appearances, to catch its firſt under-earth heavings, and workings, and to ſet ourſelves in oppoſition to them; for to follow it into the ſecret corners of the heart, that we cannot do. It is true, there is yet a relief in this caſe, namely that he to whom the work of deſtroying the law of ſin, and body of death in us is principally committed, namely the Holy Ghoſt, comes with his ax to the very root, neither is there any thing in an unſearchable heart that is not open and naked unto him, Heb. iv. 12. But we, in a way of duty, may hence ſee what an enemy we have to deal withal.

Secondly, As it is unſearchable, ſo it is deceitful, as in the place above mentioned; it is deceitful above all things, incomparably ſo. There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world, great in their counſels and contrivances, in reference

to their affairs private and public; great deceit in their words and actings: the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing to the deceit that is in man's heart towards himself, for that is the meaning of the expreſſion in this place, and not towards others. Now incomparable deceitfulneſs, added to unſearchableneſs, gives a great addition and increaſe of ſtrength, to the law of ſin, upon the account of its ſeat and ſubject. I ſpeak not yet of the deceitfulneſs of ſin itſelf, but the deceitfulneſs of the heart where it is ſeated. Prov. xxvi. 25. There are ſeven abominations in the heart;" that is, not only many, but an abſolute complete number, as ſeven denotes: and they are ſuch abominations as conſiſt in deceitfulneſs; ſo the caution fore-going inſinuates, truſt him not; for it is only deceit that ſhould make us not to truſt in that degree and meaſure which the object is capable of.

Now this deceitfulneſs of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harbouring of ſin, lies chiefly in theſe two things:

Firſt, That it abounds in contradictions, ſo that it is not to be found and dealt withal according to any conſtant rule, and way of procedure. There are ſome men that have much of this from their natural conſtitution, or from other cauſes in their converſation. They ſeem to be made up of contradictions; ſometimes to be very wiſe in their affairs, ſometimes very fooliſh; very open, and very reſerved; very facile, and very obſtinate; very eaſy to be entreated, and very revengeful, all in a remarkable height. This is generally accounted a bad character, and is ſeldom found but when it proceeds from ſome notable predominent luſt. But in general, in reſpect of moral good or evil, duty or ſin, it is ſo with the heart of every man; flaming hot, and key cold; weak,

and yet ſtubborn; obſtinate, and facile. The frame of the heart, is ready to contradict itſelf every moment. Now you would think you had it all for ſuch a frame, ſuch a way; anon it is quite otherwiſe: ſo that none know what to expect from it. The riſe of this is the diſorder that is brought upon all its faculties by ſin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reaſon were in perfect ſubjection and ſubordination to God, and his will; the will anſwered, in its choice of good, the diſcovery made of it by the mind; the affections conſtantly and evenly followed the underſtanding and will. The mind's ſubjection to God was the ſpring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the ſoul, and all the wheels in it. That being diſturbed by ſin, the reſt of the faculties move croſs and contrary one to another; the will chuſeth not the good which the mind diſcovers; the affections delight not in that which the will chuſeth, but all jar and interfere, croſs and rebel againſt each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence ſometimes the will leads, the judgment follows. Yea, commonly the affections that ſhould attend upon all, get the ſovereignty, and draw the whole ſoul captive after them. And hence it is, as I ſaid, that the heart is made up of ſo many contradictions in its actings. Sometimes the mind retains its ſovereignty, and the affections are in ſubjection, and the will ready for its duty. This puts a good face upon things. Immediately the rebellion of the affections, or the obſtinacy of the will, take place and prevail, and the whole ſcene is changed. This, I ſay, makes the heart deceitful above all things; it agrees, not at all in itſelf is not conſtant to itſelf, hath no order that it is conſtant unto, is under no certain conduct that is ſtable, but if I may ſo ſay,

hath a rotation in itſelf, where oft-times the feet lead and guide the whole.

Secondly, Its deceit lies in its full promiſings upon the firſt appearance of things. And this alſo proceeds from the ſame principle with the former. Sometimes the affections are touched and wrought upon, the whole heart appears in a fair frame, all promiſeth to be well. Within a while the whole frame is changed; the mind was not at all affected or turned; the affections a little acted their parts and are gone off, and all the fair promiſes of the heart are departed with them. Now add this deceitfulneſs to the unſearchableneſs before mentioned, and we ſhall find, that at leaſt the difficulty of dealing effectually with ſin in its ſeat and throne, will be exceedingly increaſed. A deceiving and a deceived heart, who can deal with it? eſpecially conſidering that the heart employs all its deceits unto the ſervice of ſin, contributes them all to its furtherence. All the diſorder that is in the heart, all its falſe promiſes, and fair appearances promote the intereſt and advantages of ſin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, leſt "their own hearts ſhould entice and deceive them."

Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghoſt ſo expreſſeth it, "It is deceitful above all things;" uncertain in what it doth, and falſe in what it promiſeth. And hence moreover it is amongſt other cauſes, that in the purſuit of our war againſt ſin, we have not only the old work to go over and over, but new work ſtill, while we live in this world; ſtill new ſtratagems and wiles to deal withal, as the manner will be where unſearchableneſs, and deceitfulneſs are to be contended with.

There are many other properties of this ſeat and ſubject to the law of ſin, which might be inſiſted on to the ſame end and purpoſe, but that would too far divert us from our particular deſign; and therefore I ſhall paſs theſe over with ſome few conſiderations.

Never let us reckon that our work in contending againſt ſin, in crucifying, mortifying, and ſubduing of it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unſearchable; and when we may think that we have thoroughly won the field, there is ſtill ſome reſerve remaining that we ſaw not, that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their careleſneſs after a victory; and many have been ſpiritually wounded after great ſucceſſes againſt this enemy. David was ſo, his great ſurprize into ſin was after a long profeſſion, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping of himſelf from his iniquity. And hence in part hath it come to paſs, that the profeſſion of many hath declined in their old age, or riper time, which muſt more diſtinctly be ſpoken, to afterwards. They have given over the work of mortifying of ſin, before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to purſue ſin in its unſearchable habitation, but by being endleſs in our purſuit. And that command of the apoſtle which we have, Col. iii. 5. on this account is as neceſſary for them to obſerve who are towards the end of their race, as thoſe that are but at the beginning of it. "Mortify therefore your members that are on the the earth;" be always doing it whilſt you live in this world. It is true, great ground is obtained, when the work is vigorouſly and conſtantly carried on; ſin is much weakened, ſo that the ſoul preſſeth forwards towards perfection. But yet the work muſt be endleſs, I mean whilſt we are in this world. If

we give over, we ſhall quickly ſee this enemy exerting itſelf with new ſtrength and vigour. It may be, under ſome great affliction, it may be in ſome eminent enjoyment of God, in the ſenſe of the ſweetneſs of bleſſed communion with Chriſt, we have been ready to ſay, that there was an end of ſin, that it was dead and gone for ever. But have we not found the contrary by experince? hath it not manifeſted that it was only retired into ſome unſearchable receſſes of the heart, as to its in-being and nature, though it may be greatly weakened in its power? Let us then reckon on it, that there is no way to have our work done, but by always doing of it; and he who dies fighting in this warfare, dies aſſuredly a conqueror.

Secondly, Hath it its reſidence in that which is various, conſtant, deceitful above all things, this calls for perpetual watchfulneſs againſt it. An open enemy that deals by violence only always give ſome reſpite; you know where to have him, and what he is doing, ſo as that ſometimes you may ſleep quietly without fear: but againſt adverſaries that deal by deceit and treachery, (which are long ſwords, and reach at the greateſt diſtance) nothing will give ſecurity, but perpetual watchfulneſs. It is impoſſible we ſhould in this caſe be too jealous, doubtful, ſuſpicious, or watchful. The heart hath a thouſand wiles and deceits, and if we are in the leaſt off from our watch, we may be ſure to be ſurpriſed. Hence are thoſe reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumſpect, diligent, careful, and the like. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unleſs they perſiſt in ſuch a frame. All cautions that are given in this caſe are neceſſary, eſpecially that, remember not

to believe it. Doth thy heart promiſe fair, reſt not on it, but ſay to the Lord Chriſt, Lord, do thou undertake for me. Doth the ſun ſhine fair in the morning, reckon not therefore on a fair day; the clouds may ariſe and fall; though the morning give a fair appearance of ſerenity and peace, turbulent affections may ariſe, and cloud the ſoul with ſin and darkneſs.

Thirdly then, commit the whole matter with all care and diligence unto him who can ſearch the heart to the uttermoſt, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries and deceits. In the things before mentioned lies our duty, but here lies our ſafety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts, but he can ſearch it to the uttermoſt; there's no deceit in them, but he can diſappoint it. This courſe David takes, Pſal. cxxxix. after he had ſet forth the omnipreſence of God, and his omniſcience, Pſal. cxxxix. 8, 9, 10. he makes improvement of it, ver. 23. "Search me, O Lord, and try me." As if he had ſaid, It is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be ſincere, I would not have reſerves for ſin retained therein; wherefore do thou, who art preſent with my heart, who knoweſt my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it thoroughly, for thou alone art able ſo to do.

There are yet other arguments for the evidencing of the power and ſtrength of indwelling ſin, from whence it is termed a law, which we moſt muſt paſs through according to the order wherein before we laid them down.

CHAP. IV.

Indwelling ſin enmity againſt God. Thence its power. Admits of no peace nor reſt: Is againſt God himſelf; Acts itſelf in averſation from God, and propenſity to evil. Is univerſal; To all of God; In all of the ſoul; Conſtant.

WE have ſeen the ſeat and ſubject of this law of ſin. In the next place we might take a view of its nature in general, which alſo will manifeſt its power and efficacy. But this I ſhall not enlarge upon; it being not my buſineſs to declare the nature of indwelling ſin, it hath alſo been done by others. I ſhall therefore only in reference unto our ſpecial deſign in hand, conſider one property of it, that belongs unto its nature: and this always where ever it is. And this is that which is expreſſed by the apoſtle, "The carnal mind is enmity againſt God;" Rom. viii. 7. that which is here called the wiſdom of the fleſh, is the ſame with the law of ſin, which we inſiſt on. And what ſays he hereof? why it is enmity againſt God. It is not only an enemy, for ſo poſſibly ſome reconciliation of it unto God might be made, but it is enmity itſelf, and not capable of accepting any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies is to deſtroy the enmity. So the apoſtle in another caſe tells, "we who were enemies, are reconciled unto God," Rom. v. 10. that is a work compoſed and brought about by the blood of Chriſt; the reconciling of the greateſt enemies. But when he comes to ſpeak of enmity, there is no

way for it, but it muſt be aboliſhed and deſtroyed, "Having aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity," Eph. ii. 15. there is no way to deal with any enmity whatever, but by its abolition or deſtruction.

And this alſo lies in it, as it is enmity, that very part and parcel of it, if we may ſo ſpeak, the leaſt degree of it that can poſſibly remain in any one, whilſt, and where there is any thing of its nature, is enmity ſtill. It may not be ſo effectual and powerful in operation, as where it hath more life and vigour, but it is enmity ſtill. As every drop of poiſon, is poiſon, and will infect, and every ſpark of fire, is fire, and will burn; ſo is every thing of the law of ſin, the laſt, the leaſt of it, it is enmity, it will poiſon, it will burn, That which is any thing in the abſtract is ſtill ſo, whilſt it hath any being at all. Our apoſtle, who may well be ſuppoſed to have made as great a progreſs in the ſubduing of it, as any one on the earth, yet after all, cries out for deliverance, as from an irreconcileable enemy, Rom. vii. 24. The meaneſt acting, the meaneſt and moſt imperceptible working of it, is the acting and working of enmity. Mortification abates of its force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of ſin. Whatever effect be wrought upon it, there is no effect wrought in it, but that it is enmity ſtill, ſin ſtill. Thus then by it is our ſtate and condition. "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. He is ſo in himſelf, eternally excellent and deſireable above all. He is ſo to us, he is ſo in the blood of his ſon, and in all the inexpreſſible fruits of it, by which we are what we are, and wherein all our future hopes and expectations are wrapped up. Againſt this God we carry about us an enmity, all our days. An enmity that hath this, from its nature, that it is inca-

pable of cure, or reconciliation. Deſtroyed it may be, it ſhall be, but cured it cannot be. If a man hath an enemy to deal with that is too mighty for him, as David had with Saul, he may take the courſe that he did, conſider what it is that provoked his enemy againſt him, and ſo addreſs himſelf to remove the cauſe, and make up his peace, "If the Lord have ſtirred thee up againſt me, let him accept an offering, but if they be the children of men, curſed be they of the Lord," 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Come it from God or man, there is yet hopes of peace. But when a man hath enmity itſelf to deal withal, nothing is to be expected but continual fighting to the deſtruction of the one party. If it be not overcome and deſtroyed, it will overcome and deſtroy the ſoul.

And here lies no ſmall part of its power which we are inquiring after; it can admit of no terms of peace, of no compoſition. There may be a compoſition where there is no reconciliation. There may be a truce where there is no peace. But with this enemy we can obtain neither the one nor the other. It is never quiet conquering, nor conquered, which was the only kind of enemy of whom the famous warrior complained, of old. It is in vain for a man to have any expectation of reſt from his luſt, but by its death: of abſolute freedom, but by his own. Some in the tumultuating of their corruptions, ſeek for quietneſs by labouring to ſatisfy them, "making proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof?" as the apoſtle ſpeaks, Rom xiii. 14. This is to aſſake fire by wood and oil. As all the fuel in the world, all the fabric of the creation that is combuſtible, being caſt into the fire, will not at all ſatisfy it, but increaſe it; ſo is it with ſatisfaction given to ſin by ſinning, it doth but inflame and increaſe.

If a man will part with ſome of his goods unto an enemy it may ſatisfy him; but enmity will have all, and, is not one whit more ſatisfied, than if he had received nothing at all. Like the lean cattle that were never the leſs hungry, for having devoured the fat. You cannot bargain with the fire to take but ſo much of your houſes; ye have no way but to quench it. It is in this caſe, as it is in the conteſt between a wiſe man and a fool, "whether he rage or laugh there is no reſt." Prov. xxix. 9. Whatever frame or temper he be in, his importunate folly makes him troubleſome. It is ſo with this indwelling ſin, whether her age or laugh, whether it violently tumultuate, as it will do on provocations and temptations, it will be outrageous in the ſoul; or whether it ſeem to be pleaſed and contented to be ſatisfied, all is one, there is no peace, no reſt to be had with it, or by it. Had it then been of any other nature, ſome other way might have been fixed on, but being it conſiſts in enmity, all the relief the ſoul hath, muſt lie in its ruin.

Secondly, It is not only ſaid to be enmity, but it is ſaid to be enmity againſt God. It hath choſen a great enemy indeed. It is in ſundry places propoſed as our enemy, "Abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. They are enemies to the ſoul, that is to ourſelves. Sometimes as an enemy to the ſpirit, "The fleſh luſteth or fighteth againſt the ſpirit," Gal. v. 17. It fights againſt the ſpirit, or the ſpiritual principle that is in us, to conquer it; it fights againſt our ſouls to deſtroy them. It hath ſpecial ends and deſigns againſt our ſouls, and againſt the principle of grace that is in us; but its proper formal object is God, it is enmity againſt God. It is its work to oppoſe grace, it is a conſequence of its work to oppoſe our ſouls, which follows

upon what it doth, more than what it intends; but its nature and formal deſign is to oppoſe God; God as the Law-giver, God as Holy, God as the author of the goſpel; a way of ſalvation by grace, and not by works, is the direct object of the law of ſin. Why doth it oppoſe duty, "ſo that the good we would do, we do not," either as to matter or manner? Why doth it render the ſoul carnal, indiſpoſed, unbelieving, unſpiritual, weary, wandering? it is becauſe of its enmity to God, whom the ſoul aims to have communion with in duty. It hath as it were that command from Satan, which the Aſſyrians had from their king, "Fight neither with ſmall nor great, ſave only with the king of Iſrael," 1 Kings xxii. 31. It is neither great nor ſmall, but God himſelf, the king of Iſrael, that ſin ſets itſelf againſt. There lies the ſecret formal reaſon of all its oppoſition to good, even becauſe it relates unto God. May a road, a trade, a way of duties be ſet up, where communion with God is not aimed at, but only the duty itſelf, as is the manner of men in moſt of their ſuperſtitious worſhip; the oppoſition that will lie againſt it from the law of ſin will be very weak, eaſy and gentle. Or as the Aſſyrians, becauſe of his ſhew of a king, aſſaulted Jehoſhaphat, but when they found that it was not Ahab, they turned back from purſuing of him. Becauſe there is a ſhew and appearance of the worſhip of God, ſin may make head againſt it at firſt, but when the duty cries out in the heart, that indeed God is not there; ſin turns away to ſeek out its proper enemy, even God himſelf elſe where. And hence do many poor creatures ſpend their days in diſmal tiring ſuperſtitions, without any great reluctancy from within, when others cannot be ſuffered freely to watch with Chriſt in a ſpiritual manner one hour. And

it is no wonder that men fight with carnal weapons for their ſuperſtitious worſhip without, when they have no fighting againſt it within. For God is not in it; and the law of ſin makes not oppoſition to any duty, but to God in every duty. This is our ſtate and condition; all the oppoſition that ariſeth in us unto any thing that is ſpiritually good, whether it be from darkneſs in the mind, or averſation in the will, or ſloth in the affections, all the ſecret arguings and reaſonings that are in the ſoul in purſuit of them, the direct object of them is God himſelf. The enmity lies againſt him, which conſideration ſurely ſhould influence us to a perpetual conſtant watchfulneſs over ourſelves.

It is thus alſo in reſpect of all propenſity unto ſin, as well as averſation from God. It is God himſelf that is aimed at. It is true, the pleaſures, the wages of ſin, do greatly influence the ſenſual carnal affections of men: but it is the holineſs and authority of God, that ſin itſelf riſes up againſt: it hates the yoke of the Lord; "Thou haſt been weary of me," ſaith God to ſinners, and that during their performance of abundance of duties. Every act of ſin is a fruit of being weary of God. Thus Job tells us, what lies at the bottom in the heart of ſinners; "they ſay to the Lord, depart from us:" it is enmity againſt him and averſation from him. Here lies the formal nature of every ſin, it is an oppoſition to God, a caſting off his yoke, a breaking off the dependance which the creature ought to have on the Creator. And the apoſtle gives the reaſon why he affirms, "the carnal mind to be enmity againſt God;" namely, becauſe "it is not ſub-"ject to the will of God, nor indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. It never is, nor will, nor can be ſubject to God, its whole nature conſiſting in op-

poſition to him. The ſoul wherein it is, may be ſubject to the law of God, but this law of ſin ſets up in contrariety unto it, and will not be in ſubjection.

To manifeſt a little farther the power of this law of ſin from this property of its nature, that it is enmity againſt God; one or two inſeparable adjuncts of it may be conſidered, which will farther evince it.

Firſt, It is univerſal; ſome contentions are limited unto ſome particular concerns, this is about one thing, that about another. It is not ſo here, the enmity is abſolute and univerſal, as are all enmities that are grounded on the nature of the things themſelves. Such enmity is againſt the whole kind of that which is its object. Such is this enmity; for Firſt, It is univerſal to all of God; and Secondly, It is univerſal in all of the ſoul.

Firſt, It is univerſal to all of God if there were any thing of God, his nature, properties, his mind or will, his law or goſpel, any duty of obedience to him, of communion with him, that ſin had not an enmity againſt, the ſoul might have a conſtant ſhelter and retreat within itſelf, by applying itſelf to that of God, to that of duty towards him, to that of communion with him, that ſin would make no oppoſition againſt. But the enmity lies againſt God, and all of God, and every thing wherein or whereby we have to do with him. It is not ſubject to the law, nor any part or parcel, word or title of the law. Whatever is oppoſite to any thing as ſuch, is oppoſite unto all of it. Sin is enmity to God as God, and therefore to all of God. Not his goodneſs, not his holineſs, not his mercy, not his grace, nothis promiſes; there is not any thing of him, which it doth not make head againſt; nor any duty,

private, public, in the heart, in external works, which it oppoſeth not. And the nearer (if I may ſo ſay) any thing is to God, the greater is its enmity unto it. The more of ſpirituality and holineſs is in any thing, the greater is its enmity. That which hath moſt of God, hath moſt of its oppoſition. Concerning them in whom this law is predominant, God ſays, "Ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and you would have none of my reproof," Prov. i. 25. Not this or that part of God's counſel, his mind or will is oppoſed, but all his counſel; whatever he calleth for, or guideth unto, in every particular of it, all is ſet at nought, and nothing of his reproof attended unto. A man would think it not very ſtrange that ſin ſhould maintain an enmity againſt God in his, which comes to judge it, to condemn it; but it raiſeth a greater enmity againſt him is goſpel, wherein he tenders mercy and pardon, as a deliverance from it, and that merely becauſe more of the glorious properties of God's nature, more of his excellencies and condeſcenſion is manifeſted therein, than in the other.

Secondly, It is univerſal in all of the ſoul. Would this law of ſin have contented itſelf to have ſubdued any one faculty of the ſoul, would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage, it might poſſibly have been with more eaſe oppoſed, or ſubdued. But when Chriſt comes with his ſpiritual power upon the ſoul to conquer it to himſelf, he hath no quiet landing place. He can ſet foot on no ground but what he muſt fight for and conquer. Not the mind, nor an affection, not the will, but all is ſecured againſt him. And when grace hath made its entrance, yet ſin will dwell in all its coaſts. Were any thing in the ſoul at perfect freedom and liberty, there a ſtand might be made

to drive it from all the reſt of its holds: But it is univerſal, and wars in the whole ſoul. The mind hath its own darkneſs and vanity to wreſtle with; the will its own ſtubbornneſs, obſtinacy and perverſeneſs; every affection its own frowardneſs and averſation from God, and its ſenſuality to deal withal; ſo that one cannot yield relief unto another, as they ought; they have as it were their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble. But I muſt not inſiſt on theſe particulars, or I could abundantly ſhew how diffuſed this principle of enmity againſt God is through the whole ſoul.

Secondly, Hereunto might be added its conſtancy. It is conſtant unto itſelf, it wavers not, it hath no thoughts of yielding or giving over, notwithſtanding the powerful oppoſition that is made unto it both by the law and goſpel, as afterwards ſhall be ſhewed.

This then is a third evidence of the power of ſin taken from its nature and properties, wherein I have fixed but one inſtance for its illuſtration, namely, that it is enmity againſt God, and that univerſal and conſtant. Should we enter upon a full deſcription of it, it would require more ſpace and time than we have alloted to this whole ſubject. What hath been delivered may give us a little ſenſe of it, if it be the will of God, and ſtir us up unto watchfulneſs. What can be of a more ſad conſideration than that we ſhould carry about us conſtantly that which is enmity againſt God, and that not in this or that particular, but in all that he is, and in all wherein he hath revealed himſelf. I cannot ſay it is well with them who find it not. It is well with them indeed in whom it is weakened and the power of it aba-

ted. But yet for them who ſay it is "not in them, they do but deceive themſelves, and there is no truth in them."

CHAP. V.

Nature of ſin farther diſcovered, as it is enmity againſt God. Its averſation from all good, opened. Means to prevent the effects of it prescribed.

WE have conſidered ſomewhat of the nature of indwelling ſin, not abſolutely, but in reference unto the diſcovery of its power. But this more clearly evidenceth itſelf in its actings and operations. Power is an act of life, and operation is the only diſcoverer of life. We know not that any thing lives, but by the effects and works of life. And great and ſtrong operations, diſcover a powerful and vigorous life. Such are the operations of this law of ſin, which are all demonſtrations of its power.

That which we have declared concerning its nature, is, that it conſiſts in enmity. Now there are two general heads of the working or operation of enmity. Firſt, averſation. Secondly, oppoſition.

Firſt, Averſation. Our Saviour, deſcribing the enmity that was between himſelf and the teachers of the Jews, by the effects of it, ſaith in the prophet, "my ſoul loatheth them, and their ſoul alſo abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8. Where there is mutual enmity, there is mutual averſation, loathing, and abomination. So it was

between the Jews and the Samaritans, they were enemies, and abhorred one another, John iv. 9.

Secondly, Oppoſition, or contending againſt one another, is the next product of enmity; "He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought againſt them," Iſa. lxiii. 10. ſpeaking of God towards the people. Where there is enmity, there will be fighting, it is the proper and natural product of it. Now both theſe effects are found in this law of ſin.

Firſt, For averſation, there is an averſation in it unto God, and every thing of God, as we have in part diſcovered in handling the enmity itſelf, and ſo ſhall not need much to inſiſt upon it again. All indiſpoſition unto duty, wherein communion with God is to be obtained, all wearineſs of duty, all carnality, or formality under duty, it all ſprings from this root. The wiſe man cautions us againſt this evil, "When thou goeſt to the houſe of God, keep thy foot," Eccles. v. 1. Haſt thou any ſpiritual duty to perform, and doſt thou deſign the attaining any communion with God? look to thyſelf, take care of thy affections, they will be gadding and windering, and that from their averſation to what thou haſt in hand. There is not any good that we would do, wherein we may not find this averſation exerciſing itſelf. "When I would do good, evil is preſent with me;" at any time, at all times, when I would do any thing that is ſpiritually good, it is preſent; that is, to hinder me, to obſtruct me in my duty, becauſe it abhors and loaths the thing which I have in hand, it will keep me off from it if it be poſſible. In them in whom it prevails, it comes at length unto that frame which is expreſſed in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 31. It will allow an outward bodily preſence

unto the worſhip of God, wherein it is not concerned, but it keeps the heart quite away.

It may be ſome will pretend, they find it not ſo in themſelves, but they have freedom and liberty in and unto all the duties of obedience that they attend unto. But I fear, this pretended liberty will be found, upon examination, to ariſe from one or both of theſe cauſes: Firſt, ignorance of the true ſtate and condition of their own ſouls, of their inward man and its actings towards God. They know not how it is with them, and therefore are not to be believed in what they report. They are in the dark, and neither know what they do, nor whither they are going. It is probable the phariſee knew little of this matter, which made him boaſt of his duties to God himſelf. Or, ſecondly, it may be whatever duties of worſhip or obedience ſuch perſons perform, they may, through want of faith, and an intereſt in Chriſt, have no communion with God in them. And if ſo, ſin will make but little oppoſition unto them therein. We ſpeak of them whoſe hearts are exerciſed with theſe things; and if, under their complaints of them, and groanings for deliverance from them, others cry out unto them, ſtand off, we are holier than ye, they are willing to bear their condition, as knowing that their way may be ſafe, though it be troubleſome, and being willing to ſee their own dangers, that they may avoid the ruin which others fall into.

Let us then a little conſider this averſation in ſuch acts of obedience, as wherein there is no concernment but that of God and the ſoul. In public duties there may be a mixture of other conſiderations; they may be ſo influenced by cuſtom and neceſſity, that a right judgment cannot, from them, be made of this matter. But let us take into conſideration, the duties of re-

tirement, as private prayer and meditation, and the like; or elſe extraordinary duties, or duties to be performed in an extraordinary manner.

Firſt, In theſe will this averſation and loathing of entimes diſcover itſelf in the affections. A ſecret ſtriving will be in them about cloſe and cordial dealing with God. Unleſs the hand of God in his ſpirit be high and ſtrong upon the ſoul, even when convictions, ſenſe of duty, dear and real eſteem of God, and communion with him, have carried the ſoul into its cloſet; yet, if there be not the vigour and power of a ſpiritual life conſtantly at work, there will be a ſecret lothneſs in them unto duty; yea, ſometimes there will be a violent inclination to the contrary; ſo that the ſoul had rather do any thing, embrace any diverſion, though it wound itſelf thereby, than vigorouſly apply itſelf unto that, which in the inward man it breathes after. It is weary before it begins, and ſays, when will the work be over? here God and the ſoul are immediately concerned, and it is a great conqueſt to do what we would, though we come exceedingly ſhort of what we ſhould do.

Secondly, It diſcovers itſelf in the mind alſo. When we addreſs ourſelves to God in Chriſt, we are, as Job ſpeaks, "to fill our mouths with arguments," Job. xxiii. 4. that we may be able to plead with him, as he calls upon us to do; "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together," Iſa. xliii. 26. Whence the church is called upon to take unto itſelf words, or arguments, in going to God, Hoſ. xiv. 2. The ſum is, that the mind ſhould be furniſhed with the conſiderations that are prevailing with God, and be in readineſs to plead them, and to manage them in the moſt ſpiritual manner to the beſt advantage. Now is there no difficulty to get the mind into ſuch a

frame, as to lay out itſelf to the utmoſt in this work? to be clear, ſteady, and conſtant in its duty? to draw out, and make uſe of its ſtores and furniture of promiſes and experiences? it ſtarts, wanders, flags, and all from this ſecret averſation unto communion with God, which proceeds from the law of indwelling ſin. Some complain that they can make no work of meditation, they cannot bend their minds unto it. I confeſs there may be a great cauſe of this, in their want of a right underſtanding of the duty itſelf, and of the ways of managing the ſoul in it, which therefore I ſhall a little ſpeak to afterwards. But yet this ſecret enmity hath its hand in the loſs they are at alſo, and that both in their minds and in their affections. Others are forced to live in family and public duties, they find ſuch little benefit and ſucceſs in private. And here hath been the beginning of the apoſtacy of many profeſſors, and the ſource of many fooliſh ſenſual opinions. Finding this averſation in their minds and affections from cloſeneſs and conſtancy in private ſpiritual duties, not knowing how to conquer and prevail againſt theſe difficulties through him who enables us, they have at firſt been ſubdued to a neglect of them; firſt partial, then total; until having loſt all conſcience of them, they have had a door opened unto all ſin and licentiouſneſs, and ſo to a full and utter apoſtacy. I am perſuaded there are very few that apoſtatize from a profeſſion of any continuance, ſuch as our days abound with, but their door of entrance into the folly of back-ſliding, was either ſome great and notorious ſin, that bloodied their conſciences, tainted their affections, and intercepted all delight of having any thing more to do with God; or elſe it was a courſe of neglect in private duties, ariſing from a wearineſs of contending a-

gainſt that powerful averſation which they found in themſelves unto them. And this alſo, through the craft of Satan, hath been improved into many fooliſh and ſenſual opinions, of living unto God without, and above any duties of communion. And we find, that after men have, for a while, choaked and blinded their conſciences with this pretence, curſed wickedneſs, or ſenſuality, hath been the end of their folly. And the reaſon of all this is, that the giving way to the law of ſin, in the leaſt, is the giving ſtrength unto it: to let it alone, is to let it grow; not to conquer it, is to be conquered by it.

As it is in reſpect of private, ſo it is alſo in reſpect of public duties, that have any thing extraordinary in them. What ſtrivings, ſtrugglings, and pleadings are there in the heart about them, eſpecially againſt the ſpirituality of them. Yea, in and under them, will not the mind and affections ſometimes be intangled with things uncouth, new and ſtrange unto them, ſuch as at the time of the leaſt ſerious buſineſs, a man would not deign to take into his thoughts. But if the leaſt looſe liberty or advantage be given unto indwelling ſin, if it be not perpetually watched over, it will work to a ſtrange and an unexpected iſſue. In brief, let the ſoul uncloath any duty whatever, private or public, any thing that is called good; let a man diveſt it of all outward reſpects, which ſecretly inſinuate themſeves into the mind, and give it ſome complacency in what it is about, but do not render it acceptable unto God, and he ſhall aſſuredly find ſomewhat of the power, and ſome of the effects of this averſation. It begins in lothneſs and indiſpoſition, goes on with intangling the mind and affections with other things, and will end, if not prevented, in wearineſs of God, which he complains of in his peo-

ple, Isa. xliii. 22. They ceased from duty, because they were weary of God.

But this instance being of great importance to professors, in their walking with God, we must not pass it over without some intimations or directions for them, in their contending against it, and opposition to it. Only this must be premised, that I am not giving directions for the mortifying of indwelling sin in general, which is to be done alone by the spirit of Christ, by virtue of our union with him, Rom. viii. 13. but only of our particular duty, with reference unto this especial evil or effect of indwelling sin, that we have a little insisted on, or what in this single case, the wisdom of faith seems to direct unto, and call for; which will be our way and course in our progress upon the consideration of other effects of it.

First, The great means to prevent the fruits and effects of this aversation, is the constant keeping of the soul in an universally holy frame. As this weakens the whole law of sin, so answerably, all its properties; and particularly, this aversation. It is this frame only, that will enable us to say, with the psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed," Psal. lvii. 7. It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in and unto all and every one. If sin's intanglements get hold in any one thing, they will put themselves upon the soul in every thing. A constant even frame and temper in all duties, in all ways, is the only preservative for any one way. Let not him who is neglectful in public, persuade himself that all will be clear and easy in private, or on the contrary. There is an harmony in obedience: break but one part, and you interrupt the whole. Our wounds in particular, arise generally from negli-

gence as to the whole courſe. So David informs us, " Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have a reſpect unto all thy commandments," Pſal. cxix. 6. An univerſal reſpect to all God's commandments, is the only preſervative from ſhame. And nothing have we more reaſon to be aſhamed of, than the ſhameful miſcarriages of our hearts in point of duty, which are from the principle before mentioned.

Secondly, Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this averſation; let grace be before hand with it in every duty. We are directed, to " watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. and as it is unto prayer, ſo unto every duty; that is, to conſider and take care that we be not hindered from within, nor from without, as to a due performance of it. Watch againſt temptations, to oppoſe them; watch againſt the averſation that is in ſin, to prevent it. As we are not to give place to ſatan, no more are we to ſin. If it be not prevented in its firſt attempts, it will prevail. My meaning is, whatever good, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, we have to do, and find evil preſent with us, as we ſhall find it preſent, prevent its parlying with the ſoul, its inſinuating of poiſon into the mind and affections, by a vigorous, holy, violent ſtirring up of the grace, or graces, that are to be acted or ſet at work peculiarly in that duty. Let Jacob come firſt into the world, or if prevented by the violence of Eſau, let him lay hold on his heel to overthrow him, and obtain the birthright. Upon the very firſt motion of Peter to our Saviour, crying, maſter, ſpare thyſelf, he immediately replies, get thee behind me ſatan. So ought we to ſay, get thee gone, thou law of ſin, thou preſent evil, and it may be of the ſame uſe unto us. Get grace then up betimes unto duty, and be early in the rebukes of ſin.

Thirdly, Though it do its worſt, yet be ſure it never prevail to a conqueſt. Be ſure you be not wearied out by its pertinacy, nor driven from your hold by its importunity; do not faint by its oppoſition. Take the apoſtle's advice, "We deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not ſlothful," Heb. vi. 11. Still hold out in the ſame diligence. There are many ways whereby men are driven from a conſtant holy performance of duties, all of them dangerous, if not pernicious to the ſoul. Some are diverted by buſineſs, ſome by company, ſome by the power of temptations, ſome diſcouraged by their own darkneſs; but none ſo dangerous as this, when the ſoul gives over in part, or in whole, as wearied by the averſation of ſin unto it, or to communion with God in it. This argues the ſouls giving up of itſelf unto the power of ſin, which, unleſs the Lord break the ſnare of ſatan therein, will aſſuredly prove ruinous. Our Saviour's inſtruction is, that we ought "always to pray, and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1. Oppoſition will ariſe, none ſo bitter and keen as that from our own hearts: if we faint we periſh. "Take heed leſt you be wearied," ſaith the apoſtle, "and faint in your minds." Heb. xii. 3. Such a fainting as is attended with a wearineſs, and that with a giving place to the averſation working in our hearts, is to be avoided, if we would not periſh. The caution is the ſame with that of the ſame apoſtle, "rejoicing in hope, patience in tribulation, continuing inſtant in prayer," Rom. xii. 12. And in general with that other, "let not ſin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye ſhould obey it in the luſt thereof," chap. vi. 12. To ceaſe from duty, in part, or in whole, upon the averſation of ſin unto its ſpirituality, is to give ſin the rule, and to

obey it in the luſt thereof. Yield not then unto it, but hold out the conflict; wait on God, and ye ſhall prevail: "they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength, they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles, they ſhall run and not be weary, they ſhall walk and not faint," Iſa. xl. 31. But that which is now ſo difficult, will increaſe in difficulty, if we give way unto it. But if we abide in our ſtation, we ſhall prevail, the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.

Fourthly, Carry about a conſtant humbling ſenſe of this cloſe averſation unto ſpiritualneſs, that yet lies in our nature. If men find the efficacy of it, what ſhould, what conſideration can be more powerful to bring them unto humble walking with God? That after all the diſcoveries that God hath made of himſelf unto them, all the kindneſs they have received from him; his doing of them good, and not evil, in all things; there ſhould yet be ſuch an heart of unkindneſs and unbelief, ſtill abiding, as to have an averſation lying in it to communion with him. How ought the thoughts of it to caſt us into the duſt, to fill us with the ſhame and ſelf-abhorrence all our days? What have we found in God, in any of our approaches or addreſſes unto him, that it ſhould be thus with us? What iniquity have we found in him Hath he been a wilderneſs unto us, or a land of darkneſs? Did we ever loſe any thing by drawing nigh unto him? Nay, hath not therein lain all the reſt and peace which we have obtained? Is not he the fountain and ſpring of all our mercies, of all our deſirable things; Hath he not bid us welcome at our coming? Have we not received from him more than heart can conceive, or tongue expreſs? What ails then our fooliſh and wretched hearts, to harbour ſuch a curſed ſecret diſlike of him and his ways? Let us be aſhamed and

aſtoniſhed at the conſideration of it, and walk in an humbling ſenſe of it all our days. Let us carry it about with us in the moſt ſecret of our thoughts. And as this is a duty in itſelf acceptable unto God, who delights to dwell with them that are of an humble and contrite ſpirit; ſo it is of exceeding efficacy to the weakening of the evil we are treating of.

Fifthly, Labour to poſſeſs the mind with the beauty and excellency of ſpiritual things, that, ſo they may be preſented lovely and deſirable to the ſoul, and this curſed averſation of ſin will be weakened thereby. It is an innate acknowledged principle, that the ſoul of man will not keep up cheerfully unto the worſhip of God, unleſs it have a diſcovery of a beauty and comelineſs in it. Hence when men had loſt all ſpiritual ſenſe and favour of the things of God, to ſupply the want that was in their own ſouls, they invented outwardly pompous and gorgeous ways of worſhip, in images, paintings, pictures, and I know not what carnal ornaments, which they have called the beauties of holineſs. Thus much however was diſcovered therein, that the mind of man muſt ſee a beauty, a deſirableneſs in the things of God's worſhip, or it will not delight in it, averſation will prevail. Let then the ſoul labour to acquaint itſelf with the ſpiritual beauty of obedience, of communion with God, and of all duties of immediate approach to him, that it may be filled with delight in them. It is not my preſent work to diſcover the heads and ſprings of that beauty and deſireableneſs which is in ſpiritual duties, in their relation to God, the eternal ſpring of all beauty; to Chriſt, the love, deſire, and hope of all nations; to the Spirit, the great beautifier of ſouls, rendering them by his grace all glorious within, in their ſuitableneſs to the ſouls of men, as to

their actings towards their last end, in the rectitude and holiness of the rule, in attendance whereunto they are to be performed; but I only say at present in general, that to acquaint the soul thoroughly with these things is an eminent way of weakenening the aversation spoken of.

CHAP. VI.

The work of this enmity against God, by way of opposition. First, It lusteth. Wherein the lusting of sin consisteth. In surprising of the soul; readiness to close with temptations; its fighting and warring. (1.) *In rebellion against the law of grace.* (2.) *In assaulting the soul.*

HOW this enmity worketh by way of aversation, hath been declared, as also the means that the soul is to use for the preventing of its effects and prevalency. The second way whereby it exerts itself is opposition. Enmity will oppose and contend with that wherewith it is at enmity. It is so in things natural and moral. As light and darkness, heat and cold, so virtue and vice oppose each other. So it is with sin and grace, saith the apostle, these are contrary one to the other," Gal. v. 17. they are placed and set in mutual opposition, and that continually and constantly, as we shall see.

Now there are two ways whereby enemies manage an opposition. First, By force; and Secondly, By fraud and deceit. So when the Egyptians became enemies to the children of Israel, and managed an enmity against them, Pharaoh

ſaid, " Let us deal wiſely," Exod. i. 10. or rather, cunningly and ſubtly with this people; for ſo Stephen, with reſpect to this word, expreſſeth it Acts vii. 19. he uſed all manner of fraudulent ſophiſtry. And unto this deceit they added force, in their grievous oppreſſions. This is the way and manner of things where there is a prevailing enmity. And both theſe are made uſe of by the law of ſin, in its enmity againſt God and our ſouls.

I ſhall begin with the firſt; or its actings as it were in a way of force, in an open down-right oppoſition to God, and his law, or the good that a believing ſoul would do in obedience unto God, and his law. And in this whole matter, we muſt be careful to ſteer our courſe aright, taking the ſcripture for our guide, with ſpiritual reaſon and experience for our companions. For there are many ſhelves in our courſe, which muſt be diligently avoided, that none who conſider theſe things, be troubled without cauſe, or comforted without a juſt foundation.

In this firſt way, whereby this ſin exerts its enmity in oppoſition, namely, as it were by force or ſtrength, there are four things, expreſſing ſo many diſtinct degrees in its progreſs and procedure in the purſuit of its enmity.

Firſt, Its general inclination, it " luſteth," Gal. v. 17.

Secondly, Its particular way of contending, it " fights, or wars," Rom. vii. 23. Jam. iv. 1, 1. Pet. ii. 11.

Thirdly, Its ſucceſs in this conteſt, it brings the ſoul into " captivity to the law of ſin," Rom. vii. 23.

Fourthly, Its growth and rage upon ſucceſs, it comes up to madneſs, Eccles. ix. 3. as an enraged enemy will do, All which we muſt ſpeak to in order.

Firſt, In general, it is ſaid to luſt. "The fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit," Gal. v. 17. This word expreſſeth the general nature of that oppoſition which the law of ſin maketh againſt God, and the rule of his ſpirit or grace in them that believe. And therefore the leaſt degree of that oppoſition is expreſſed hereby. When it doth any thing it luſteth. As becauſe burning is the general acting of fire, whatever it doth elſe, it doth alſo burn. When fire doth any thing, it burns: and when the law of ſin doth any thing, it luſts.

Hence all the actings of this law of ſin, are called the luſts of the fleſh. "Ye ſhall not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh," Gal. v. 16. "Make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof," Rom. xiii. 14. Nor are theſe luſts of the fleſh thoſe only whereby men act their ſenſuality in riot, drunkenneſs, uncleanneſs, and the like; but they comprehend all the actings of the law of ſin whatever, in all the faculties and affections of the ſoul. Thus we have mention of the deſires or wills, or luſts of the mind, Epheſ. ii. 3. as well as of the fleſh. The mind, the moſt ſpiritual part of the ſoul, hath its luſt, no leſs than the ſenſual appetite, which ſeems ſometimes more properly to be called the fleſh. And in the products of theſe luſts, there are defilements of the ſpirit, as well as of the fleſh, 2 Cor., vii. 1; that is, of the mind and underſtanding as well as of the appetite and affections and the body that attends their ſervice. And in the blameleſneſs of all theſe, conſiſts our holineſs. "The God of peace, ſanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole ſpirit, and ſoul, and body be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." 2 Theſſ. v. 23. Yea, by the fleſh in this matter, the whole old man, or the law of ſin is intended: "That which is born of fleſh, is fleſh:" John iii. 6. that is, it is alſo,

and nothing elſe. And whatever remains of the old nature in the new man, is fleſh ſtill. And this fleſh luſteth; this law of ſin doth ſo, which is the general bottom and foundation of all its oppoſition unto God. And this it doth two ways.

[1.] In an hidden cloſe propenſity unto all evil. This lies in it habitually. While a man is in the ſtate of nature, fully under the power and dominion of this law of ſin, it is ſaid, that "every figment of his heart is evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. It can frame, faſhion, produce, or act nothing but what is evil: becauſe this habitual propenſity unto evil, that is in the law of ſin, is abſolutely predominant in ſuch an one. It is in the heart, like poiſon, that hath nothing to allay its venemous qualities, and ſo infects whatever it touches. And where the power and dominion of it is broken, yet in its own nature, it hath ſtill an habitual propenſity unto that which is evil, wherein its luſting doth conſiſt.

But here we muſt diſtinguiſh between the habitual frame of the heart, and the natural propenſity or habitual inclination of the law of ſin in the heart. The habitual inclination of the heart is denominated from the principle that bears chief or ſovereign rule in it: and therefore in believers it is unto good, unto God, unto holineſs, unto obedience. The heart is not habitually inclined unto evil by the remainders of indwelling ſin, but this ſin in the heart hath a conſtant habitual propenſity unto evil in itſelf, or its own nature. This the apoſtle intends by its being preſent with us; it is preſent with me, that is, always, and for its own end, which is to luſt unto ſin.

It is with indwelling ſin as with a river; while the ſprings and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually ſupplied into its ſtreams, ſet a dam before it, and it cauſeth it to riſe and ſwell,

until it bear down all, or overthrow the banks about it. Let theſe waters be abated, dried up, in ſome good meaſure, in the ſprings of them, and the remainder may be checked and reſtrained. But ſtill, as long as there is any running water it will conſtantly preſs upon what ſtands before it according to its weight and ſtrength, becauſe it is its nature ſo to do. And if by any means it make a paſſage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling ſin; while the ſprings and fountains of it are open, in vain is it for men to ſet a dam before it, by their convictions, reſolutions, vows, and promiſes. They may check it for a while, but it will increaſe, riſe high, and rage at one time or another, until it bears down all thoſe convictions and reſolutions, or makes itſelf an under-ground paſſage by ſome ſecret luſt that ſhall give a full vent unto it. But now ſuppoſe that the ſprings of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the ſtreams or actings of it abated by holineſs; yet whilſt any thing remains of it, it will be preſſing conſtantly to have vent, to preſs forward into actual ſin. And that is its luſting.

And this habitual propenſity in it is diſcovered two ways.

1. In its unexpected ſurpriſals of the ſoul into fooliſh ſinful figments and imaginations, which it looked not for, nor was any occaſion adminiſtered unto them. It is with indwelling ſin, as it is with the contrary principle of ſanctifying grace. This gives the ſoul, if I may ſo ſay, many a bleſſed ſurpriſal. It often ingenerates and brings forth an holy ſpiritual frame in the heart and mind, when we have had no previous rational conſiderations to work them thereunto. And this manifeſts it to be an habitual principle prevailing in the mind: ſo we read, "Or ever I was aware my ſoul made me as the chariots of Ammi-nadib,"

Cant. vi. 12. that is, free, willing and ready for communion with Chriſt. I knew not; it was done by the power of the ſpirit of grace, ſo that I took no notice of it, as it were, until it was done. The frequent actings of grace in this manner, exciting acts of faith, love, and complacency in God, are evidences of much ſtrength and prevalency of it in the ſoul. And thus alſo it is with indwelling ſin; ere the ſoul is aware, without any provocation or temptation, when it knows not, it is caſt into a vain and fooliſh frame. Sin produceth its figments ſecretly to the heart, and prevents the mind's conſideration of what it is about. I mean hereby thoſe *actus primò primi*, firſt acts of the ſoul, which are thus far unvoluntary, as that they have not the actual conſent of the will unto them; but are voluntary, as far as ſin hath its reſidence in the will. And theſe ſurpriſals, if the ſoul be not awake to take ſpeedy care for the prevention of their tendency, do oftentimes ſet all as it were on fire, and engage the mind and affections into actual ſin: for as by grace we are oftentimes, ere we are aware, made as the chariots of a willing people, and are far engaged in heavenly-mindedneſs, and communion with Chriſt, making ſpeed in it as in a chariot; ſo by ſin are we oftentimes, ere we are aware, carried into diſtempered affections, fooliſh imaginations, and pleaſing delightfulneſs, in things that are not good nor profitable. Hence is that caution of the apoſtle, Gal. vi. 1. If a man be ſurpriſed unawares with a fault, or in a tranſgreſſion, I doubt not but the ſubtlety of ſatan, and the power of temptation, are there taken into conſideration by the apoſtle, which cauſeth him to expreſs a man's falling into ſin, if he be ſurpriſed: ſo this working of indwelling ſin alſo hath its conſideration in it, and that in the chiefeſt place, without which

nothing elſe could ſurpriſe us. For without the help thereof, whatever comes from without, from ſatan, or the world, muſt admit of ſome parley in the mind, before it be received; but it is from within, from ourſelves, that we are ſurpriſed. Hereby we are diſappointed and wrought over to to do that which we would not, and hindered from the doing of that which we would.

Hence it is, that when the ſoul is oftentimes doing as it were quite another thing, engaged quite upon another deſign, ſin ſtarts that in the heart, or imaginations of it, that carries it away into that which is evil and ſinful. Yea, to manifeſt its power, ſometimes when the ſoul is ſeriouſly engaged in the mortification of any ſin, it will by one means or other lead it away into a dalliance with that very ſin whoſe ruin it is ſeeking, and whoſe mortification it is engaged in. But as there is in this operation of the law of ſin, a ſpecial enticing or entangling, we ſhall ſpeak unto it fully afterwards. Now theſe ſurpriſals can be from nothing but an habitual propenſity to evil, in the principle from whence they proceed. Not an habitual inclination unto actual ſin in the mind or heart, but an habitual propenſity unto evil in the ſin that is in the mind or heart. This prevents the ſoul with its figments. How much communion with God is hereby prevented, how many meditations are diſturbed, how much the minds and conſciences of men have been defiled by this acting of ſin, ſome may have obſerved. I know no greater burthen in the life of a believer, than theſe involuntary ſurpriſals of ſoul; involuntary, I ſay, as to the actual conſent of the will, but not ſo in reſpect of that corruption which is in the will, and is the principle of them. And it is in reſpect unto theſe, that the apoſtle utters his complaint, Rom vii. 24.

2. This habitual inclination manifeſts itſelf in its readineſs and promptneſs, without diſpute, or altercation, to join and cloſe with every temptation, whereby it may poſſibly be excited. As we know it is in the nature of fire to burn, becauſe it immediately lays hold on whatever is combuſtible. Let any temptation whatever be propoſed unto a man, the ſuitableneſs of whoſe matter unto his corruptions, or manner of its propoſal, makes it a temptation; immediately he hath not only to do with the temptation, as outwardly propoſed, but alſo with his own heart, about it. Without farther conſideration, or debate, the temptation hath got a friend in him. Not a moments ſpace is given between the propoſal, and the neceſſity there is incumbent on the ſoul to look to its enemy within. And this alſo argues a conſtant habitual propenſity unto evil. Our Saviour ſaid of the aſſaults and temptations of ſatan, "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath no part in me" John. xiv. 30. He had more temptations intenſively and extenſively in number, quality and fierceneſs, from ſatan and the world, than ever had any of the ſons of men: but yet, in all of them, he had to deal only with that which came from without. His holy heart had nothing like them, nothing ſuited to them, or ready to give them entertainment: "The prince of this world had nothing in him." So it was with Adam; when a temptation befel him, he had only the outward propoſal of it to look unto, all was well within, until the untoward temptation took place, and prevailed. With us it is not ſo.

In a city that is at unity in itſelf, compact and entire, without diviſions and parties, if an enemy approach about it, the rulers and inhabitants have no thoughts at all, but only how they may oppoſe the enemy without, and reſiſt him in his

approaches. But if the city be divided in itſelf if there be factions and traitors within, the very firſt thing they do, is to look to the enemies at home, the traitors within; to cut off the head of Sheba, if they will be ſafe. All was well with Adam within doors, when ſatan came, ſo that he had nothing to do but to look to his aſſaults and approaches. But now, on the acceſs of any temptation, the ſoul is inſtantly to look in, where it ſhall find this traitor at work, cloſing with the baits of ſatan, and ſtealing away the heart. And this it doth always, which evinceth an habitual inclination. David ſays, "I am ready to halt," Pſ. xxxviii. 17. or, for halting; I am prepared and diſpoſed unto hallucination, to the ſlipping of my foot into ſin, Pſal. xxxviii. 16. as he expounds the meaning of that phraſe in another place, Pſal. lxxiii. 2, 3. There was, from indwelling ſin, a continual diſpoſition in him to be ſlipping, ſtumbling, halting, on every occaſion, or temptation. There is nothing ſo vain, fooliſh, ridiculous, fond; nothing ſo vile and abominable, nothing ſo atheiſtical or execrable, but if it be propoſed unto the ſoul in a way of temptation, there is that in this law of ſin which is ready to anſwer it, before it be decried by grace. And this is the firſt thing in this luſting of the law of ſin, it conſiſts in its habitual propenſity unto evil, manifeſting itſelf by the involuntary ſurpriſals of the ſoul unto ſin, and its readineſs, without diſpute or conſideration, to join with all temptations whatſoever.

[2.] Its luſting conſiſts in its actual preſſing after that which is evil, and actual oppoſition unto that which is good. The former inſtances ſhewed its conſtant readineſs to this work, this now treats of the work itſelf. It is not only ready, but for the moſt part always engaged. It

luſteth, ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, it doth ſo continually. It ſtirreth, in the ſoul, by one act or other, conſtantly, almoſt as the ſpirits in the blood, or the blood in the veins. This the apoſtle calls its tempting, "Every man is tempted of his own luſt," Jam. i. 14. Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that propoſed to a man's conſideration, which, if he choſe withal, it is evil, it is ſin unto him. This is ſin's trade; it luſteth. It is raiſing up in the heart, and propoſing unto the mind and affections, that which is evil; trying, as it were, whether the ſoul will cloſe with its ſuggeſtions, or how far it may carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. Now when ſuch a temptation comes from without, it is unto the ſoul an in indifferent thing, neither good nor evil, unleſs it be conſented unto. But the very propoſal from within, it being the ſoul's own act, is its ſin. And this is the work of the law of ſin; it is reſtleſly and continually raiſing up, and propoſing innumerable various forms and appearances of evil, in this or that kind, indeed in every kind, that the nature of man is capable to exerciſe corruption in. Something or other, in matter, or manner, or circumſtance, inordinate, unſpiritual, unanſwerable unto the rule, it hatcheth and propoſeth unto the ſoul. And this power of ſin to beget figments and ideas of actual evil in the heart, the apoſtle may have reſpect unto, 1. Theſſ. v. 22. Keep yourſelves from every evil figment or idea of ſin in the heart; for the word there uſed doth not any where ſignify an outward form or appearance; neither is it the appearance of evil, but an evil idea or figment that is intended. And this luſting of ſin, is that which the prophet expreſſeth in wicked men, in whom the law of it is predominant, "The wicked are like the troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt

up mire and dirt," Iſa. lvii. 20. A ſimilitude, moſt lively expreſſing the luſtings of the law of ſin, reſtleſly and continually bubbling up in the heart, with wicked, fooliſh, and filthy imaginations and deſires. This then is the firſt thing in the oppoſition that this enmity makes to God, namely, in its general inclination : it luſteth.

Secondly, There is its particular way of contending, it fights or wars ; that is, it acts with ſtrength and violence, as men do in war. Firſt, It luſts ; ſtirring and moving inordinate figments in the mind, deſires in the appetite and the affections, propoſing them to the will. But it reſts not there, it cannot reſt ; it urgeth, preſſeth and purſueth its propoſals with earneſtneſs, ſtrength and vigour, fighting, and contending, and warring to obtain its end and purpoſe. Would it merely ſtir up and propoſe things to the ſoul, and immediately acquieſce in the ſentence and judgment of the mind, that the thing is evil, againſt God, and his will and not farther to be inſiſted on, much ſin might be prevented that is now produced. But it reſts not here, it proceeds to carry on its deſign, and that with earneſtneſs and contention. By this means, wicked men inflame themſelves, Iſa. lvii. 5. They are ſelf-inflamers, as the word ſignifies, unto ſin ; every ſpark is cheriſhed in them, until it grows into a flame ; and ſo it will do in others, where it is ſo cheriſhed.

Now this fighting, or warring of ſin, conſiſts in two things.

[1.] In its rebellion againſt grace, or the law of the mind.

[2.] In its aſſaulting the ſoul, contending for rule and ſovereignty over it.

The firſt is thus expreſſed by the apoſtle, "I find," ſaith he, "another law, rebelling againſt

the law of my mind," Rom. vii. 23. There are, it ſeems, two laws in us, the law of the fleſh, or of ſin; and the law of the mind, or of grace. But contrary laws cannot both obtain ſovereign power over the ſame perſon, at the ſame time. The ſovereign power in believers, is the hand of the law of grace; ſo the apoſtle declares, "I delight in the law of God in the inward man," ver. 22. Obedience unto this law is performed with delight and complacency in the inward man, becauſe its authority is lawful and good. So more expreſly, "For ſin ſhall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law but under grace," chap. vi. 14. Now to war againſt the law that hath a juſt ſovereignty, is to rebel; and ſo ſignifies (the word); it is to rebel, and ought to have been ſo tranſlated, rebelling againſt the law of my mind. And this rebellion conſiſts in a ſtubborn, obſtinate oppoſition unto the commands and directions of the law of grace. Doth the law of the mind command any thing as duty? doth it ſeverely riſe up againſt any thing that is evil? When the luſting of the law of ſin riſes up to this degree, it contends againſt obedience with all its might, the effect whereof, as the apoſtle tells us, is the doing of that which we would not, and the not doing of that which we would, Rom. vii. 15, 16. And we may gather a notable inſtance of the power of ſin, in this its rebellion, from this place. The law of grace prevails upon the will, ſo that it would do that which is good. "To will is preſent with me," ver. 18. "when I would do good," ver. 19. And again, And I would not do evil, ver. 21. And it prevails upon the underſtanding, ſo that it approves, or diſapproves, according to the dictates of the law of grace: "I conſent unto the law that it is good," ver. 16. The

judgment always lies on the ſide of grace. It prevails alſo on the affections: "I delight in the law of God in the inward man," ver. 22. Now if this be ſo, that grace hath the ſovereign power in the underſtanding, will, and affections, whence is it that it doth not always prevail, that we do not always do that which we would, and abſtain from that which we would not? Is it not ſtrange, that a man ſhould not do that which he chuſeth, willeth, liketh, delighteth in? Is there any thing more required to enable us unto that which is good. The law of grace doth all, as much as can be expected from it, that which in itſelf is abundantly ſufficient for the perfecting of all holineſs in the fear of the Lord. But here lies the difficulty, in the entangling oppoſition that is made by the rebellion of this law of ſin. Neither is it expreſſible, with what vigour and variety ſin acts itſelf in this matter. Sometimes it propoſeth diverſions, ſometimes it cauſeth wearineſs, ſometimes it finds out difficulties, ſometimes it ſtirs up contrary affections, ſometimes it begets prejudices, and one way or other entangles the ſoul, ſo that it never ſuffers grace to have an abſolute and complete ſucceſs in any duty. Rom. vii. 18. I find not the way perfectly to work out or accompliſh that which is good; ſo the word ſignifies; and that from this oppoſition and reſiſtance, that is made by the law of ſin. Now this rebellion appears in two things.

1. In the oppoſition that it makes unto the general purpoſe and courſe of the ſoul.

1. In the oppoſition that it makes unto particular duties.

2. In the oppoſition it makes to the general purpoſe and courſe of the ſoul. There is none in whom is the ſpirit of Chriſt, that is his, but it is his general deſign and purpoſe, to walk in an univerſal conformity unto him, in all things.

Even from the inward frame of the heart, to the whole compaſs of his outward actions, ſo it is with him. This God requires in his covenant, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," Gen. xvii. 1. Accordingly, his deſign is to walk before God, and, his frame is ſincerity and uprightneſs therein. This is called, "cleaving to the Lord with purpoſe of heart;" Acts. xi. 23. that is, in all things, and that not with a ſlothful, dead, ineffectual purpoſe, but ſuch as is operative, and ſets the whole ſoul at work in purſuit of it. This the apoſtle ſets forth, when he ſays, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which alſo I am apprehended of Chriſt Jeſus, Brethren, I count not myſelf to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting thoſe things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus," Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. He uſeth three words, excellently expreſſing the ſoul's univerſal purſuit of this purpoſe of heart in cleaving unto God. Firſt, ſaith he, "I follow after," proſecute; the word ſignifies properly to perſecute, which, with what earneſtneſs and diligence it is uſually done, we know. Secondly, "I reach forward," reaching with great intenſeneſs of ſpirit and affections. It is a great and conſtant endeavour that is expreſſed in that word. Thirdly, "I preſs towards the mark," that is, even as men that are running for a prize. All ſet forth the vigour, earneſtneſs, diligence and conſtancy that is uſed in the purſuit of this purpoſe. And this the nature of the principle of grace requireth in them in whom it is. But yet we ſee with what failings, yea, fallings, their purſuit of this courſe is attended. The frame of the heart is

changed, the heart is ſtolen away, the affections entangled, eruptions of unbelief and diſtempered paſſions diſcovered, carnal wiſdom, with all his attendants, ſet on work; all contrary to the general principle and purpoſe of the ſoul. And all this is from the rebellion of this law of ſin, ſtirring up and provoking the heart unto diſobedience. The prophet gives this character of hypocrites, "Their heart is divided, therefore ſhall they be found faulty," Hoſ. x. 2. Now though this be wholly ſo, in reſpect of the mind and judgment in hypocrites only, yet it is partially ſo in the beſt, in the ſenſe deſcribed. They have a diviſion not of the heart, but in the heart; and thence it is that they are ſo often found faulty. So ſaith the apoſtle, "So that we cannot do the things that we would," Gal. v. 17. We cannot accompliſh the deſign of cloſe walking, according to the law of grace, becauſe of the contrariety and rebellion of this law of ſin.

2. It rebels alſo in reſpect unto particular duties. It raiſeth a combuſtion in the ſoul, againſt the particular commands and deſignings of the law of grace; "You cannot do the things that you would;" that is, the duties which you judge incumbent on you, which you approve and delight in, in the inward man; you cannot do them as you would. Take an inſtance in prayer. A man addreſſeth himſelf unto that duty, he would not only perform it, but he would perform it in that manner that the nature of the duty, and his own condition do require. He would pray in the ſpirit, fervently, with ſighs and groans that cannot be uttered; in faith, with love and delight, pouring forth his ſoul unto the Lord: this he aims at. Now oftentimes he ſhall find a rebellion, a fighting of the law of ſin in this matter. He ſhall find it difficult to get any thing done,

who thought to do all things. I do not ſay, that it is thus always, but it is ſo when ſin wars and rebels, which expreſſeth an eſpecial acting of its power. Woful intanglements do poor creatures oftentimes meet withal upon this account. Inſtead of that free inlarged communion with God that they aim at, the beſt that their ſouls arrive unto, is but to go away mourning for their folly, deadneſs and indiſpoſition. In a word, there is no command of the law of grace, that is known, liked of, and approved by the ſoul; but when it comes to be obſerved, this law of ſin, one way or other, makes head and rebels againſt it. And this is the firſt way of its fighting.

[2.] It doth not only rebel and reſiſt, but it aſſaults the ſoul; it ſets upon the law of the mind and grace, which is the ſecond part of its warring. "They fight, or war againſt the ſoul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. "They fight, or war, in your members," Jam. iv. 1. Peter ſhews what they oppoſe and fight againſt, namely, the ſoul, and the law of grace therein; James, what they fight with, or by, namely, the members, or the corruption that is in our mortal bodies. To rebel againſt a ſuperior is to aſſault or war for ſuperiority. It takes the part of an aſſailant as well as of a reſiſter. It makes attempts for rule and ſovereignty, as well as oppoſeth the rule of grace. Now all war and fighting hath ſomewhat of violence in it, and there is, therefore, ſome violence in that acting of ſin which the ſcripture calls fighting and warring. And this aſſailing efficacy of ſin, is diſtinguiſhed from its rebelling, before treated of, conſiſts in theſe things that enſue.

1. All its poſitive actings in ſtiring up unto ſin, belong to this head. Oftentimes, by the vanity of the mind, or the ſenſuality of the affections, or the folly of the imaginations, it ſets upon the

ſoul then when the law of grace is not actually putting it on duty, ſo that therein it doth not rebel, but aſſault. Hence the apoſtle cries out, "Who ſhall deliver me from it," Rom. vii. 24. who ſhall reſcue me out of its hands, as the word ſignifies. When we purſue an enemy, and he reſiſts us, we do not cry out, who ſhall deliver us, for we are aſſailants; but, who ſhall reſcue me, is the cry of one, who is ſet upon by an enemy. So it is here; a man is aſſaulted by his own luſts, as James ſpeaks. By the way-ſide, in his employment, under a duty, ſin ſets upon the ſoul with vain imaginations, fooliſh deſires, and would willingly employ the ſoul to make proviſion for its ſatisfaction: which the apoſtle cautions us againſt, Rom. xiii. 14. Do not accompliſh the providence, or projection; of the fleſh, for its own ſatisfaction.

2. Its importunity and urgency ſeem to be noted in this expreſſion of its warring. Enemies in war are reſtleſs, preſſing and importunate. So is the law of ſin. Doth it ſet upon the ſoul? caſt off its motions, it returns again; rebuke them by the power of grace, they withdraw for a while, and return again. Set before them the croſs of Chriſt, they do as thoſe that came to take him; at the ſight of him, they went backwards, and fell unto the ground, but they aroſe again and laid hands on him. Sin gives place for a ſeaſon, but returns and preſſeth on the ſoul again. Mind it of the love of God in Chriſt, though it be ſtricken, yet it gives not over. Preſent hell-fire unto it, it ruſheth into the midſt of thoſe flames. Reproach it with its folly and madneſs, it knows no ſhame, but preſſeth on ſtill. Let the thoughts of the mind ſtrive to fly from it, it follows as on the wings of the wind. And by this importunity it wearies and wears out the ſoul, and if the great

remedy, Rom. viii. 13. come not timely, it prevails to a conqueſt. There is nothing more marvellous nor dreadful in the working of ſin, than this of its importunity. The ſoul knows not what to make of it; it diſlikes, abhors, abominates the evil it tends unto, it deſpiſeth the thoughts of it, hates them as hell, and yet is by itſelf impoſed on with them, as if it were another perſon, an expreſs enemy got within him. All this the apoſtle diſcovers, "The things that I do I hate;" Rom. vii. 15, 17. It is not of outward actions, but the inward riſings of the mind, that he treats I hate them, ſays he, I abominate them. But why then will we have any thing more to do with them? If he hate them, and abhor himſelf for them, let them alone, have no more to do with them, and ſo end the matter. Alas, ſaith he, "It is no more I that do it, but ſin that dwelleth in me," Rom. vii. 17. I have one within me that is my enemy, that with endleſs reſtleſs importunity puts theſe things upon me, even the things that I hate and abominate; I cannot be rid of them, I am weary of myſelf, I cannot fly from them; "O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me?" I do not ſay that this is the ordinery condition of believers, but thus it is often when this law of ſin riſeth up to ward and fighting. It is not thus with them in reſpect of particular ſins, this or that ſin, outward ſins, ſins of life or converſation; but yet, in reſpect of vanity of mind, inward and ſpiritual diſtempers, it is often ſo. Some, I know, pretend to great perfection, but I am reſolved to believe the apoſtle before them all and every one.

3. It carries on its war, by entangling of the affections, and drawing them into a combination againſt the mind. Let grace be enthroned in the mind and judgment, yet, if the law of ſin lays

hold upon, and entangles the affections, or any of them, it hath gotten a fort, from whence it continually aſſaults the ſoul. Hence the great duty of mortification, is chiefly directed to take place upon the affections; "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanneſs, inordinate affection, concupiſcence and covetouſneſs, which is idolatry," Col. iii. 5. The members that are upon the earth, are our affections. For in the outward part of the body, ſin is not ſeated: in particular, not covetouſneſs, which is there enumerated to be mortified amongſt our members that are on the earth. Yea, after grace hath taken poſſeſſion of the ſoul, the affections do become the principal ſeat of the remainders of ſin. And therefore Paul ſaith, that this law is in our members, Rom vii. 23. and James, that it wars in our members: Jam. iv. 1. that is our affections. And there is no eſtimate to be taken of the work of mortification aright, but by the affections. We may every day ſee perſons of very eminent light, that yet viſibly have unmortified hearts and converſations. Their affections have not been crucified with Chriſt. Now then, when this law of ſin can poſſeſs any affection, whatever it be, love, delight, fear, it will make, from it and by it, fearful aſſaults upon the ſoul. For inſtance, hath it got the love of any one entangled with the world, or the things of it, "the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, or the pride of life:" How will it take advantage, on every occaſion, to break in upon the ſoul. It ſhall do nothing, attempt nothing, be in no place, or company, perform no duty, private or public, but ſin will have one blow or other at it; it will be one way or other ſoliciting for itſelf.

This is the ſum of what we ſhall offer unto this ecting unto the law of ſin, in a way of fighting

and warring againſt our ſouls, which is ſo often mentioned in the ſcripture. And a due conſideration of it is of no ſmall advantage unto us, eſpecially to bring us unto ſelf abaſement, to teach us to walk humbly and mournfully before God. There are two things that are ſuited to humble the ſouls of men. And they are, Firſt, A due conſideration of God, and then of themſelves. Of God, in his greatneſs, glory, holineſs, power, majeſty and authority; of ourſelves, in our mean, abject, and ſinful condition. Now of all things in our condition, there is nothing ſo ſuited unto this end and purpoſe, as that which lies before us; namely, the vile remainders of enmity againſt God, which are yet in our hearts and natures. And it is no ſmall evidence of a gracious ſoul, when it is willing to ſearch itſelf in this matter, and to be helped therein from a word of truth. When it is willing that the word ſhould dive into the ſecret parts of the heart, and rip open whatever of evil and corruption lies therein. The prophet ſays of Ephraim, "He loved to tread out the the corn;" Hoſ. x. 11. he loved to work when he might eat, to have always the corn before him; but God ſays, he would cauſe him to plough; a labour no leſs needful, though at preſent not ſo delightful. Moſt men love to hear of the doctrine of grace, of the pardon of ſin, of free love, and ſuppoſe they find food therein; however, it is evident that they grow and thrive in the life and notion of them. But to be breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, to be inquiring after the weeds and briars that grow in them, they delight not ſo much; though this be no leſs neceſſary than the other. This path is not ſo beaten as that of grace, nor ſo trod in, though it be the only way to come to a true knowledge of grace itſelf. It may be, ſome who are wiſe and grown in

other truths, may yet be ſo little ſkilled in ſearching their own hearts, that they may be ſlow in the perception and underſtanding of theſe things. But this ſloth and neglect is to be ſhaken off, if we have any regard unto our own ſouls. It is more than probable, that many falſe hypocrites who have deceived themſelves as well as others, becauſe they thought the doctrine of the goſpel pleaſed them, and therefore ſuppoſed they believed it, might be delivered from their ſoul-ruining deceits, if they would diligently apply themſelves unto this ſearch of their own hearts. Or would other profeſſors walk with ſo much boldneſs and ſecurity as ſome do, if they conſidered aright what a deadly watchful enemy they continually carry about with them, and in them? Would they ſo much indulge, as they do, carnal joys, and pleaſures; or purſue their periſhing affairs with ſo much delight and greedineſs as they do? It were to be wiſhed, that we would all apply our hearts more to this work, even to come to a true underſtanding of the nature, power and ſubtilty of this our adverſary, that our ſouls may be humbled; and that,

Firſt, In walking with God: his delight is with the humble and contrite ones, thoſe that tremble at his word, the mourners in Zion, and ſuch are we, only when we have a due ſenſe of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence of God, ſenſe of our diſtance from him, admiration of his grace and condeſcenſion, a due valuation of mercy, far above thoſe light, verbal, airy attainments that ſome have boaſted of.

Secondly, In walking with others: It lays in proviſion to prevent thoſe great evils of judging, ſpiritual unmercifulneſs, harſh cenſuring, which I have obſerved to have been pretended by many,

who at the ſame time, as afterwards hath appeared, have been guilty of greater or worſe crimes than thoſe which they have raved againſt in others. This, I ſay, will lead us to meekneſs, compaſſion, readineſs to forgive, to paſs by offences, even when we ſhall conſider what is our ſtate, as the apoſtle plainly declares, Gal. vi. 1. The man that underſtands the evil of his own heart, how vile it is, is the only uſeful, fruitful, and ſolidly believing and obedient perſon. Others are fit only to delude themſelves, to diſquiet families, churches, and all relations whatever. Let us then conſider our hearts wiſely, and then go and ſee if we can be proud of our gifts, our graces, our valuation and eſteem among profeſſors, our enjoyments. Let us go then and judge, condemn, reproach others that have been tempted, we ſhall find a great inconſiſtency in theſe things. And many things of the like nature might be here added, upon the conſideration of this woful effect of indwelling ſin. The way of oppoſing and defeating its deſign herein ſhall be afterwards conſidered.

CHAP. VII.

The captivating power of indwelling ſin, wherein it conſiſteth. The prevalency of ſin, when from itſelf, when from temptation. The rage and madneſs that is in ſin.

THE third thing aſſigned unto this law of ſin in its oppoſition to God, and the law of his grace, is that it leads the ſoul captive, "I find a

law leading me captive (captivating me) unto the law of ſin," Rom. vii. 23. And this is the utmoſt height which the apoſtle in that place carries the oppoſition and warring of the remainders of indwelling ſin unto; cloſing the conſideration of it with a complaint of the ſtate and condition of believers thereby; and an earneſt prayer for deliverance from it. "O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death." What is contained in this expreſſion, and intended by it, ſhall be declared in the enſuing obſervations.

[1.] It is not directly the power and actings of the law of ſin that are here expreſſed, but its ſucceſs in and upon its actings. But ſucceſs is the greateſt evidence of power, and leading captive in war, is the height of ſucceſs. None can aim at greater ſucceſs, than to lead their enemies captive. And it is a peculiar expreſſion, in the ſcripture, of great ſucceſs. So the Lord Chriſt, on his victory over ſatan, is ſaid to have "led captivity captive," Epheſ. iv. 8. That is, to conquer him, who had conquered and prevailed over others. And this he did, when by death he "deſtroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil," Heb. ii. 14. Here then a great prevalency and power of ſin, in its warring againſt the ſoul, is diſcovered. It ſo wars, as to lead captive; which, had it not great power, it could not do, eſpecially againſt that reſiſtence of the ſoul, which is included in this expreſſion.

[2.] It is ſaid, that it leads the ſoul captive unto the law of ſin. Not to this or that particular ſin, actual ſin, but to the law of ſin. God, for the moſt part, ordereth things ſo, and gives out ſuch ſupplies of grace unto believers, as that they ſhall not be made a prey unto this or that particular ſin, that it ſhould prevail in them, and com-

pel them to ſerve it in the luſts thereof, that it ſhould have dominion over them, that they ſhould be captives and ſlaves unto it. This is that which David prays ſo earneſtly againſt, "Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults: keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins, let them not have dominion over me, then ſhall I be upright," Pſal. xix. 12, 13. He ſuppoſeth the continuance of the law of ſin in him, ver. 12. which will bring forth errors of life; and ſecret ſins, againſt which he findeth relief in pardoning and cleanſing mercy, which he prays for. This, ſaith he, will be my condition. But for ſins of pride and boldneſs, ſuch as all ſins are that get dominion in a man, that make a captive of a man, the Lord reſtrain thy ſervant from them. For what ſin ſoever gets ſuch power in a man, be it in its own nature ſmall or great, it becomes, in him in whom it is, a ſin of boldneſs, pride, and preſumption. For theſe things are not rekoned from the nature or kind of the ſin, but from its prevalency and cuſtomarineſs, wherein its pride, boldneſs, and contempt of God doth conſiſt. To the ſame purpoſe, if I miſtake not, prays Jabez, "O that thou wouldſt bleſs me indeed, and enlarge my coaſt, and that thine hand may be with me, and that thou wouldſt keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me," 1 Chro. iv. 10. The holy man took occaſion from his own name to pray againſt ſin, that that might not be a grief and ſorrow to him, by its power and prevalency. I confeſs, ſometimes it may come to this with a believer, that for a ſeaſon he may be led captive by ſome particular ſin. It may have ſo much prevalency in him, as to have power over him. So it ſeems to have been with David when he lay ſo long in his ſin without repentance. And was plainly ſo with thoſe of whom God ſpeaks in the prophet, "For

the iniquity of his covetouſneſs was I wroth, and ſmote him, I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have ſeen his ways, and will heal him," Iſa. lvii. 17, 18. They continued under the power of their covetouſneſs: ſo that no dealings of God with them, for ſo long a time could reclaim them. But, for the moſt part, when any luſt or ſin doth ſo prevail, it is from the advantage and furtherance that it hath got by ſome powerful temptation of ſatan. He hath poiſoned it, inflamed it, and entangled the ſoul. So the apoſtle, ſpeaking of ſuch as through ſin were fallen off from their holineſs, ſays, "They were in the ſnare of the devil, being taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii. 26. Though it were their own luſts that they ſerved, yet they were brought into bondage thereunto, by being entangled in ſome ſnare of ſatan, and thence they are ſaid to be taken alive, as a poor beaſt in a toil.

And here, by the way, we may a little inquire, whether the prevailing power of a particular ſin in any, be from itſelf, or from the influence of temptation upon it; concerning which, at preſent take only theſe two obſervations.

1. Much of the prevalency of ſin upon the ſoul, is certainly from ſatan, when the perplexing and captivating ſin hath no peculiar footing, nor advantage in the nature, conſtitution, or condition of the ſinner. When any luſt grows high and prevailing, more than others, upon its own account, it is from the peculiar advantage that it hath in the natural conſtitution, or the ſtation, or condition of the perſon in the world. For otherwiſe the law of ſin gives an equal propenſity unto all evil, an equal vigour unto every luſt. When, therefore, it cannot be diſcerned, that the captivating ſin is peculiarly fixed in the nature of

the ſinner, or is advantaged from his education or employment in the world, the prevalency of it is peculiarly from ſatan. He hath got to the root of it, and hath given it poiſon and ſtrength. Yea, perhaps ſometimes that which may ſeem to the ſoul to be the corrupt luſting of the heart, is nothing but ſatan's impoſing his ſuggeſtions on the imagination. If then a man find an importunate rage from any corruption, that is not evidently ſeated in his nature, let him, as the Papiſts ſay, croſs himſelf, or fly by faith to the croſs of Chriſt, for the devil is nigh at hand.

2. When a luſt is prevalent unto captivity, where it brings in no advantage to the fleſh, it is from ſatan. All that the law of ſin doth of itſelf, is to ſerve the providence of the fleſh; Rom. xiii. 14. and it muſt bring in unto it ſomewhat of the profits and pleaſures that are its object. Now if the prevailing ſin do not ſo act itſelf, if it be more ſpiritual and inward, it is much from ſatan by the imagination, more than the corruption of the heart itſelf. But this by the way.

I ſay then, that the apoſtle treats not here of our being captivated unto this or that ſin, but unto the law of ſin. That is, we are compelled to bear its preſence and burden whether we will or no. Sometimes the ſoul thinks, or hopes, that it may, through grace, be utterly freed from this troubleſome inmate. Upon ſome ſweet enjoyment of God, ſome full ſupply of grace, ſome return from wandering, ſome deep affliction, ſome thorough humiliation, the poor ſoul begins to hope that it ſhall now be freed from the law of ſin. But, after a while, it perceives that it is quite otherwiſe. Sin acts again, makes good its old ſtation, and the ſoul finds that, whether it will or no, it muſt bear its yoke. This makes it ſigh and cry out for deliverance.

[3.] This leading captive, argues a prevalency againſt the renitency or contrary actings of the will. This is intimated plainly in this expreſſion, namely, that the will oppoſeth, and makes head as it were, againſt the working of ſin. This the apoſtle declares in thoſe expreſſions which he uſes in the 15, 19, 20 verſes. And herein conſiſts the luſting of the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, Gal. v. 17. that is, the contending of grace to expel and ſubdue it. The ſpiritual habits of grace that are in the will, do ſo reſiſt and act againſt it; and the excitation of thoſe habits by the ſpirit are directed to the ſame purpoſe. This leading captive is contrary, I ſay, to the inclinations and actings of the renewed will. No man is made a captive but againſt his will. Captivity is miſery and trouble, and no man willingly puts himſelf into trouble. Men chuſe it in its cauſes, and in the ways and means leading unto it, but not in itſelf. So the prophet informs us, "Ephraim was not willingly oppreſſed and broken in judgment," Hoſ. v. 11. that was his miſery and trouble; but he willingly walked after the commandment of the idolatrous kings, which brought him thereunto. Whatever conſent then the ſoul may give unto ſin, which is the means of this captivity, it gives none to the captivity itſelf; that is againſt the will wholly. Hence theſe things enſue.

1. That the power of ſin is great: which is that which we are in the demonſtration of: and this appears in its prevalency unto captivity, againſt the actings and contendings of the will for liberty from it. Had it no oppoſition made unto it, or were its adverſary weak, negligent, ſlothful, it were no great evidence of its power, that it made captives. But its prevailing againſt diligence, activity, watchfulneſs, the conſtant renitency of the will; this evinceth its efficacy.

2. This leading captive intimates manifold particular ſucceſſes. Had it not ſucceſſes in particular, it could not be ſaid at all to lead captive. Rebel it might, aſſail it might, but it cannot be ſaid to lead captive without ſome ſucceſſes. And there are ſeveral degrees of the ſucceſs of the law of ſin in the ſoul. Sometimes it carries the perſon unto outward actual ſin, which is its utmoſt aim. Sometimes it obtaineth the conſent of the will, but is caſt out by grace, and proceeds no further. Sometimes it wearies and entangles the ſoul, that it turns aſide as it were, and leaves contending, which is a ſucceſs alſo. One, or more, or all of theſe muſt be, where captivity takes place. Such a kind of courſe doth the apoſtle aſcribe unto covetouſneſs, 1 Tim. vi. 6.

3. This leading captive manifeſts this condition to be miſerable and wretched. To be thus yoked and dealt withal againſt the judgment of the mind, the choice and conſent of the will, its utmoſt ſtrivings and contendings, how ſad is it? When the neck is ſore and tender with former preſſures to be compelled to bear the yoke again, this pierces, this grieves, this even breaks the heart. When the ſoul is principled by grace unto a loathing of ſin, of every evil way, to an hatred of the leaſt diſcrepancy between itſelf and the holy will of God, then to be impoſed on by this law of ſin, with all that enmity and folly, that deadneſs and filth, wherewith it is attended: what more dreadful condition? All captivity is dreadful in its own nature: the greateſt aggravation of it is from the condition of the tyrant unto whom any is captivated. Now what can be worſe than this law of ſin? Hence the apoſtle, having once mentioned this captivity, cries out as one quite weary and ready to faint, ver 24.

4. This condition is peculiar to believers. Unregenerate men are not ſaid to be led captive to the law of ſin. They may, indeed, be led captive unto this or that particular ſin or corruption; that is, they may be forced to ſerve it againſt the power of their convictions. They are convinced of the evil of it; an adulterer of his uncleaneſs, a drunkard of his abomination; and make ſome reſolutions, it may be, againſt it; but their luſt is too hard for them, they cannot ceaſe to ſin, and ſo are made captives or ſlaves to this or that particular ſin. But they cannot be ſaid to be led captive to the law of ſin, and that becauſe they are willingly ſubject thereunto. It hath, as it were, a rightful dominion over them, and they oppoſe it not, but only when it hath eruptions to the diſturbance of their conſciences. And then the oppoſition they make unto it is not from their wills, but is the mere acting of an affrighted conſcience, and a convinced mind. They regard not the nature of ſin, but its guilt and conſequences. But to be brought into captivity, is that which befalls a man againſt his will. Which is all that ſhall be ſpoken unto this degree of the actings of the power of ſin, manifeſting itſelf in its ſucceſs.

The fourth and laſt degree of the oppoſition made by the law of ſin to God, and the law of his will and grace, is in its rage and madneſs. There is madneſs in its nature. "The heart of the ſons of men is full of evil, and madneſs is in their heart," Eccles. ix. 3. The evil that the heart of man is full of by nature, is that indwelling ſin whereof we ſpeak. And this is ſo in their heart, that it riſeth up unto madneſs. The Holy Ghoſt expreſſeth this rage of ſin by a fit ſimilitude, which he uſeth in ſundry places, Jer. ii. 24. It maketh men as a wild aſs: ſhe traverſeth her ways, and ſnuffeth up the wind, and runneth

whither her mind or luſt leads her. And he ſaith of idolaters, enraged with their luſts, that they "are mad upon their idols," Jer v. 38. Hoſ. viii. 9. We may a little conſider what lies in this madneſs and rage of ſin, and how it riſeth up thereunto.

[1.] For the nature of it, it ſeems to conſiſt in a violent, heady, pertinacious preſſing unto evil or ſin. Violence, importunity and pertinacy are in it. It is the tearing and torturing of the ſoul by any ſin, to force its conſent, and to obtain ſatisfaction. It riſeth up in the heart, is denied by the law of grace, and rebuked; it returns and exerts its poiſon again; the ſoul is ſtartled, caſts it off, it returns again with new violence and importunity; the ſoul cries out for help and deliverance, looks round about to all ſprings of goſpel grace and relief, trembles at the furious aſſaults of ſin, and caſts itſelf into the arms of Chriſt for deliverance. And if it be not able to take that courſe, it is foiled, and hurried up and down, through the mire and filth of fooliſh imaginations, corrupt and noiſome luſts, which rend and tear it, as if they would devour its whole ſpiritual life and power, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. 2. Pet. ii. 14. It was not much otherwiſe with them whom we inſtanced before, Iſa lvii. 17. they had an inflamed inraged luſt working in them; even covetouſneſs, or the love of this world; by which, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, men "pierce themſelves through with many ſorrows." God is angry with them, and diſcovereth his wrath by all the ways and means that it was poſſible for them to be made ſenſible thereof. He was wroth and ſmote them; but though, it may be, this ſtaggered them a little, yet they went on. He is angry, and hides himſelf from them; deſerts them as to his gracious, aſſiſting, comforting preſence. Doth this work

the effect? No, they go on frowardly ſtill, as men mad on their covetouſneſs. Nothing can put a ſtop to their raging luſts. This is plain madneſs and fury. We need not ſeek far for inſtances; we ſee men mad on their luſts every day; and, which is the worſt kind of madneſs, their luſts do not rage ſo much in them, as they rage in the purſuit of them. Are thoſe greedy purſuits of things in the world, which we ſee ſome men engaged in, though they have other pretences, indeed any thing elſe but plain madneſs in the purſuit of their luſts? God, who ſearcheth the hearts of men, knows that the moſt of things that are done, with other pretences in the world, are nothing but the actings of men, mad and furious in the purſuit of their luſts.

[2.] That ſin ariſeth not unto this height ordinarily, but when it hath got a double advantage.

1. That it be provoked, enraged and heightened by ſome great temptation. Though it be a poiſon in itſelf, yet being inbred in nature, it grows not violently outragious, without the contribution of ſome new poiſon of ſatan unto it, in a ſuitable temptation. It was the advantage that ſatan got againſt David, by a ſuitable temptation, that raiſed his luſts to that rage and madneſs, which it went forth unto in the buſineſs of Bathſheba and Uriah. Though ſin be always a fire in the bones, yet it flames not, unleſs ſatan come with his bellows to blow it up. And let any one, in whom the law of ſin ariſeth to this height of rage, ſeriouſly conſider, and he may find out where the devil ſtands and puts in, in this buſineſs.

2. It muſt be advantaged by ſome former entertainment and prevalency. Sin grows not to this height at its firſt aſſault. Had it not been

ſuffered to make its entrance, had there not been ſome yielding in the ſoul, this had not come about. The great wiſdom and ſecurity of the ſoul in dealing with indwelling ſin, is to put a violent ſtop unto its beginnings, its firſt motions and actings. Venture all on the firſt attempt. Die rather than yield one ſtep unto it. If, through the deceit of ſin, or the negligence of the ſoul, or its carnal confidence, to give bounds to the actings of luſt at other ſeaſons, it makes any entrance into the ſoul, and finds any entertainment, it gets ſtrength and power, and inſenſibly ariſeth to the frame under conſideration. Thou hadſt never had the experience of the fury of ſin, if thou hadſt not been content with ſome of its dalliances. Hadſt thou not brought up this ſervant, this ſlave, delicately, it would not have now preſumed beyond a ſon. Now when the law of ſin, in any particular, hath got this double advantage, the furtherance of a vigorous temptation, and ſome prevalency formerly obtained, whereby it is let into the ſtrengths of the ſoul, it often riſeth up to this frame whereof we ſpeak.

[3.] We may ſee what accompanies this rage and madneſs, what are the properties of it, what effects it produceth.

1. There is in it the caſting off, for a time at leaſt, of the yoke, rule and government, of the ſpirit and law of grace. Where grace hath the dominion, it will never utterly be expelled from its throne, it will ſtill keep its right and ſovereignty, But its influences may, for a ſeaſon, be intercepted, and its government be ſuſpended, by the power of ſin. Can we think that the law of grace had any actual influence of rule on the heart of David, when, upon the provocation received from Nabal, he was ſo hurried with the deſire of ſelf-revenge, that he cried to his companions, gird on

your ſwords, and reſolved not to leave alive one man of his whole houſehold? 1 Sam. xxv. 34. Or that Aſa, was in any better frame when he ſmote the prophet, and put him in priſon, that ſpake unto him in the name of the Lord, 2 Chron. xvi. 10. Sin, in this caſe, is like an untamed horſe, which having firſt caſt off his rider, runs away with fierceneſs and rage. It firſts caſts off a preſent ſenſe of the yoke of Chriſt, and the law of his grace, and then hurries the ſoul at its pleaſure. Let us a little conſider how this is done.

The ſeat and reſidence of grace is in the whole ſoul; it is the inner man, it is in the mind, the will, and the affections; for the whole ſoul is renewed by it unto the image of God, Eph. iv. 23, 24. And the whole man is a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 16. And in all theſe doth it exert its power and efficacy. Its rule and dominion is the purſuit of its effectual working in all the faculties of the ſoul, as they are one united principle of moral and ſpiritual operations. So then, the interrupting of its exerciſe, of its rule and power, by the law of ſin, muſt conſiſt in its contrary acting in and upon the faculties and affections of the ſoul, whereon, and by which, grace ſhould exert its power and efficacy. And this it doth. It darkens the mind, partly through innumerable vain prejudices, and falſe reaſonings, as we ſhall ſee when we come to conſider its deceitfulneſs; and partly through the ſteaming of the affections, heated with the noiſome luſts that have laid hold on them. Hence that ſaving light that is in the mind is clouded and ſtifled, that it cannot put forth its transforming power, to change the ſoul into the likeneſs of Chriſt diſcovered unto it, which is its proper work, Rom. xii. 2. The habitual inclination of the will to obedience, which is the next way of the working of the law of

grace, is firſt weakened, then caſt aſide, and rendered uſeleſs by the continual ſolicitations of ſin and temptation ; ſo that the will firſt lets go its hold, and diſputes whether it ſhall yield or no ; and, at laſt, gives up itſelf to its adverſary ; and for the affections, commonly the beginning of this evil is in them. They croſs one another, and torture the the ſoul with their impetuous violence. By this way is the rule of the law of grace intercepted by the law of ſin, even, by impoſing upon it in the ſeat of its government. When this is done, it is ſad work that ſin will make in the ſoul. The apoſtle warns believers to take heed hereof, "Let not ſin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that you ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof," Rom. vi. 12. Look to it that it get not the dominion, that it uſurp not rule, no not for a moment. It will labour to intrude itſelf into the throne, watch againſt it, or a woful ſtate and condition lies at the door. This then accompanies this rage and madneſs of the law of ſin. It caſts off during its prevalency, the rule of the law of grace wholly. It ſpeaks in the ſoul, but is not heard ; it commands the contrary, but is not obeyed. It cries out, do not this abominable thing which the Lord bateth, but is not regarded ; that is, not ſo far as to be able to put a preſent ſtop to the rage of ſin, and to recover its own rule, which God, in his own time reſtores to it, by the power of his ſpirit dwelling in us.

Madneſs or rage is accompanied with fearleſneſs and contempt of danger. It takes away the power of conſideration, and all that influence that it ought to have upon the ſoul. Hence ſinners that are wholly under the power of this rage, are ſaid, to "run upon God, and the the thick boſſes of his buckler," Job. xvi. 21. that wherein he is armed for their utter ru-

in. They deſpiſe the utmoſt that he can do to them, being ſecretly reſolved to accompliſh their luſts, though it coſt them their ſouls. Some few conſiderations will farther clear this unto us.

(1.) Oftentimes, when the ſoul is broken looſe from the power of renewing grace, God deals with it to keep it within bounds by preventing grace. So the Lord declares that he will deal with Iſrael: Hoſ. ii. 6. ſeeing thou haſt rejected me, I will take another courſe with thee; I will lay obſtacles before thee, that thou ſhalt not be able to paſs on, whither the fury of thy luſts would drive thee. He will oppoſe that to them from without, that ſhall obſtruct them in their progreſs.

(2.) Theſe hindrances that God lays in the way of ſinners, as ſhall be afterwards at large declared, are of two ſorts.

Firſt, Rational conſiderations, taken from the conſequence of the ſin and evil that the ſoul is ſolicited unto, and perplexed withal. Such are the fear of death, judgment, and hell, falling into the hands of the living God, who is a conſuming fire. Whilſt a man is under the power of the law of the ſpirit of life, the "love of Chriſt conſtraineth him," 2 Cor. v. 14. The principal of his doing good, and abſtaining from evil, is faith working by love, accompanied with a following of Chriſt, becauſe of the ſweet ſavour of his name. But now, when this bleſſed eaſy yoke is for a ſeaſon caſt off, ſo as was manifeſted before, God ſets an hedge of terror before the ſoul, minds it of death and judgment to come, flaſhes the flames of hell-fire in the face, fills the ſoul with conſiderations of all the evil conſequence of ſin, to deter it from its purpoſe. To this end doth he make uſe of all the threatnings recorded in the law and the goſpel. To this head, alſo,

may be referred all the conſideration that may be taken from things temporal, as ſhame, reproach, ſcandal, puniſhments, and the like. By the conſideration of theſe things, I ſay, doth God ſet an hedge before them.

Secondly, Providential diſpenſations are uſed by the Lord to the ſame purpoſe, and theſe are of two ſorts.

1. Such as are ſuited to work upon the ſoul, and to cauſe it to deſiſt and give over in its luſtings, and purſuit of ſin. Such are afflictions and mercies. "I was wroth, and I ſmote them," Iſa. lvii. 17. I teſtified my diſlike of their ways by afflictions, Hoſ. ii. 9, 11, 12. "God chaſtens men with pains on their bodies," ſaith he, in Job, "to turn them from their purpoſe, and to hide ſin from them," Job xxxiii. 17, 19. And other ways he hath to come to them and touch them, as in their names, relations, eſtates and deſirable things. Or elſe he heaps mercies on them, that they may conſider whom they are rebelling againſt. It may be, ſignal diſtinguiſhing mercies are made their portion for many days.

2. Such as actually hinder the ſoul from purſuing ſin, though it be reſolved ſo to do. The The various ways whereby God doth this, we muſt afterwards conſider.

Theſe are the ways, I ſay, whereby the ſoul is dealt withal, after the law of indwelling ſin hath caſt off, for a ſeaſon, the influencing power of the law of grace. But now, when luſt riſes up to rage or madneſs, it will alſo contemn all theſe, even the rod and him that hath appointed it. It will ruſh on ſhame, reproaches, wrath, and whatever may befall it. That is, though they be preſented unto it, it will venture upon them all. Rage and madneſs is fearleſs. And this it doth two ways.

First, It poſſeſſeth the mind, that it ſuffers not the conſideration of theſe things to dwell upon it, but renders the thoughts of them ſlight and evanid. Or if the mind do force itſelf to a contemplation of them, yet it interpoſeth between it and the affections, that they ſhall not be influenced by it, in any proportion to what is required. The ſoul, in ſuch a condition, will be able to take ſuch things into contemplation, and not at all to be moved by them. And where they do prevail for a ſeaſon, yet they are inſenſibly wrought off from the heart again.

Secondly, By ſecret ſtubborn reſolves to venture all upon the way wherein it is.

And this is the ſecond branch of this evidence of the power of ſin, taken from the oppoſition that it makes to the law of grace, as it were by the way of force, ſtrength and violence. The conſideration of its deceit doth now follow.

CHAP. VIII.

Indwelling ſin proved powerful from its deceit. Proved to be deceitful. The general nature of deceit. James i. 14. *opened. How the mind is drawn off from its duty by the deceitfulneſs of ſin. The principle duties of the mind in our obedience. The ways and means whereby it is turned from it.*

THE ſecond part of the evidence of the power of ſin from its manner of operation, is taken from its deceitfulneſs. It adds, in its working deceit unto power. The efficacy of that muſt

needs be great, and is carefully to be watched againſt, by all ſuch as value their ſouls, where power and deceit are combined; eſpecially advantaged and aſſiſted by all the ways and means before inſiſted on.

Before we come to ſhew wherein the nature of this deceitfulneſs of ſin doth conſiſt, and how it prevaileth thereby, ſome teſtimonies ſhall be briefly given in unto the thing itſelf, and ſome light into the general nature of it.

That ſin, indwelling ſin, is deceitful, we have the expreſs teſtimony of the Holy Ghoſt: "Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin," Heb. iii. 13. Deceitful it is, take heed of it, watch againſt it, or it will produce its utmoſt effect, in hardening of the heart againſt God. It is on the account of ſin, that the heart is ſaid to be "deceitful above all things" Jer. xvii. 9. Take a man in other things, and, as Job ſpeaks, though he "would be wiſe and crafty, he is like the wild aſſes colt," Job. xi. 12. a poor, vain, empty nothing. But conſider his heart, on the account of this law of ſin, it is crafty and deceitful above all things. "They are wiſe to do evil," ſaith the prophet, "but to do good they have no knowledge," Jer. iv. 22. To the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks the apoſtle, "The old man is corrupt, according to deceitful luſts," Epheſ. iv. 22. Every luſt, which is a branch of this law of ſin, is deceitful; and where there is poiſon in every ſtream, the fountain muſt needs be corrupt. No particular luſt hath any deceit in it, but what is communicated unto it from this fountain of all actual luſt, this law of ſin. And the coming of the man of ſin, is ſaid to be in and with the "deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs," 2 Theſſ. ii. 10. Unrighteouſneſs is a thing generally decried and evil ſpoken of amongſt men, ſo that it is not ea-

ſy to conceive how any man ſhould avail himſelf of a reputation thereby. But there is a deceivableneſs in it, whereby the minds of men are turned aſide from a due conſideration of it; as we ſhall manifeſt afterwards. And thus the account which the apoſtle gives, concerning thoſe who are under the power of ſin, is, that they are deceived, Tit. iii. 3. And the life of evil men is nothing but deceiving and being deceived, 2 Tim. iii. 13. So that we have ſufficient teſtimony given unto this qualification of the enemy with whom we have to deal, he is deceitful; which conſideration, of all things, puts the mind of man to a loſs in dealing with an adverſary. He knows he can have no ſecurity againſt one that is deceitful, but in ſtanding upon his own guard and defence all his days.

Farther to manifeſt the ſtrength and advantage that ſin hath by its deceit, we may obſerve, that the ſcripture places it, for the moſt part, as the head and ſpring of every ſin, even as if there were no ſin followed after, but where deceit went before. So the reaſon the apoſtle gives why Adam, though he was firſt formed, was not firſt in the tranſgreſſions, is, becauſe he was not firſt deceived, 1 Tim. ii. 12. The woman, though made laſt, yet being firſt deceived, was firſt in the ſin. Even that firſt ſin began in deceit, and, until the mind was deceived, the ſoul was ſafe. Eve therefore did truly expreſs the matter, though ſhe did it not to a good end; "The ſerpent beguiled me," ſaid ſhe, "and I did eat," Gen. iii. 13. She thought to extenuate her own crime, by charging the ſerpent. And this was a new fruit of the ſin ſhe had caſt herſelf into. But the matter of fact was true, ſhe was beguiled before ſhe eat; deceit went before the tranſgreſſion. And the apoſtle ſhews, that ſin and ſatan ſtill take

the ſame courſe, 2 Cor. xi. 3. There is, ſaith he, the ſame way of working towards actual ſin, as was of old; beguiling, deceiving goes before, and ſin, that is, the actual accompliſhment of it, followeth after. Hence all the great work, that the devil doth in the world, to ſtir men up to an oppoſition to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his kingdom, he doth them by deceit, "The devil, who deceiveth the whole world," Rev. xii. 9. It were utterly impoſſible men ſhould be prevailed on to abide in his ſervice, acting his deſigns to their eternal, and ſometimes their temporal ruin, were they not exceedingly deceived. See chap. xx.

Hence are thoſe manifold cautions that are given us to take heed, that we be not deceived, if we would take heed that we do not ſin, Epheſ. v. 6. 1 Cor. vi. 9. xv. 33. Gal. vi. 7. Luke xxi. 8. From all which we may learn the influence that deceit hath into ſin, and conſequently the advantage that the law of ſin hath to put forth its power, by its deceitfulneſs. Where it prevails to deceive, it fails not to bring forth its fruit.

The ground of this efficacy of ſin, by deceit, is taken from the faculty of the ſoul affected with it. Deceit properly affects the mind; it is the mind that is deceived. When ſin attempts any other way of entrance into the ſoul, as by the affections, the mind, retaining its right and ſovereignty, is able to give check and controul unto it. But where the mind is tainted, the prevalency muſt be great: for the mind, or underſtanding is the leading faculty of the ſoul, and what that fixes on, the will and affections ruſh after, being capable of no conſideration but what that preſents unto them. Hence it is, that though the entanglement of the affections unto ſin, be oft-times moſt troubleſome, yet the deceit of the

mind is always moſt dangerous; and that becauſe of the place it poſſeſſeth in the ſoul, as unto all its operations. Its office is to guide, direct, chuſe and lead; and if the light that is in us be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs.

And this will farther appear, if we conſider the nature of deceit in general. It conſiſts in preſenting unto the ſoul, or mind, things otherwiſe than they are, either in their nature, cauſes, effects, or preſent reſpect unto the ſoul. This is the general nature of deceit, and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought to be ſeen and conſidered, conceals circumſtances and conſequences, preſents what is not, or things as they are not, as we ſhall afterwards manifeſt in particular. It was ſhewed before, that ſatan beguiled and deceived our firſt parents; that term the Holy Ghoſt gives unto his temptation and ſeduction. And how he did deceive them the ſcripture relates, Gen. iii. 4, 5. He did it by repreſenting things otherwiſe than they were. The fruit was deſirable, that was apparent unto the eye. Hence ſatan takes advantage ſecretly to inſinuate, that it was merely an abridgement of their happineſs that God aimed at, in forbidding them to eat of it. That it was for a trial of their obedience, that certain, though not immediate ruin would enſue upon the eating of it, he hides from them; only he propoſeth the preſent advantage of knowledge, and ſo preſents the whole caſe quite otherwiſe unto them than indeed it was. This is the nature of deceit; it is a repreſentation of a matter under diſguiſes, hiding that which is undeſirable, propoſing that which indeed is not in it, that the mind may make a falſe judgment of it. So Jacob deceived Iſaac by his brother's raiment, and the ſkins on his hands and neck.

Again, deceit hath advantage by that way of management which is inſeparable from it. It is always carried on by degrees, by little and little, that the whole of the deſign and aim in hand, be not at once diſcovered. So dealt ſatan in that great deceit before mentioned; he proceeded in it by ſteps and degrees. Firſt, He takes off an objection, and tells them they ſhall not die; then propoſeth the good of knowledge to them, and their being like to God thereby. To hide and conceal ends, to proceed by ſteps and degrees, to make uſe of what is obtained, and thence to preſs on to farther effects, is the true nature of deceit, Stephen tells the Jews, that the king of Egypt dealt ſubtilely, or deceitfully with their kindred, Acts vii. 19. How he did it we may ſee, Exod. i. He did not at firſt fall to killing and ſlaying of them, but ſays, ver. 10. "Come, let us deal wiſely;" beginning to oppreſs them. This brings forth their bondage, ver. 11. Having got this ground to make them ſlaves, he proceeds to deſtroy their children, ver. 16. He fell not on them all at once, but by degrees. And this may ſuffice to ſhew in general, that ſin is deceitful, and the advantages that it hath thereby.

For the way, and manner, and progreſs of ſin, in working by deceit, we have it fully expreſſed by the apoſtle James: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then, when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin: and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death," Jam. i. 14, 15. This place, declaring the whole of what we aim at in this matter muſt be particularly inſiſted on.

In the foregoing verſe, the apoſtle manifeſts that men are willing to drive the old trade which our firſt parents, at the entrance of ſin, ſet up withal; namely, of excuſing themſelves in their

ſin, and caſting the occaſion and blame of them on others. It is not, ſay they, from themſelves, their own nature and inclinations, their own deſignings, that they have committed ſuch and ſuch evils, but merely from their temptations. And if they know not where to fix the evil of thoſe temptations, they will lay them on God himſelf, rather than go without an extenuation of their guilt. This evil, in the hearts of men, the apoſtle rebuketh: "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth *he* any man," ver. 13. And to ſhew the *juſtneſs* of this reproof in the words mentioned, he *diſcovers* the true cauſes of the riſe and whole progreſs of ſin; manifeſting, that the whole guilt of it lies upon the ſinner, and that the whole puniſhment of it, if not graciouſly prevented, will be his lot alſo.

We have, therefore, as was ſaid, in theſe words, the whole progreſs of luſt, or indwelling ſin, by the way of ſubtilty, fraud, and deceit, expreſſed and limited by the Holy Ghoſt. And, from hence, we ſhall manifeſt the particular ways and means whereby it puts forth its power and efficacy in the heart of men by deceitfulneſs and ſubtilty; and we may obſerve in the words,

Firſt, the utmoſt end aimed at in all the actings of ſin, or the tendency of it in its own nature, and that is death: "Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death," the everlaſting death of the ſinner. Pretend what it will, this is the end it aims at, and tends unto. Hiding of ends and deſigns, is the principal property of deceit. This ſin doth to the utmoſt; other things innumerable it pleads, but not once declares that it aims at the death, the everlaſting death of the ſoul. And a fixed apprehenſion of this end of every ſin, is a

bleſſed means to prevent its prevalency in its way of deceit or beguiling.

Secondly, the general way of its acting towards that end, is, by temptation: "Every man is tempted of his own luſt." I propoſe not to ſpeak in general of the nature of temptations, it belongs not unto our preſent purpoſe, and beſides, I have done it elſewhere. It may ſuffice at preſent to obſerve, that the life of temptation lies in deceit. So that in the buſineſs of ſin, to be effectually tempted, and to be beguiled or deceived, are the ſame. Thus it was in the firſt temptation, it is every where called, the ſerpent's beguiling, or deceiving, as was manifeſted before: "The ſerpent beguiled Eve," that is, prevailed by his temptations upon her. So that every man is tempted, that is, every man is beguiled, or deceived, by his own luſt or indwelling ſin, which we have often declared to be the ſame.

The degrees whereby ſin proceedeth in this work of tempting or deceiving, are five. For we ſhewed before, that this belongs to the nature of deceit, that it works by degrees, making its advantage by one ſtep to gain another.

The firſt of theſe conſiſts in drawing off, or drawing away; "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt."

The ſecond is in enticing, "And is enticed."

The third, in the conception of ſin: "When luſt hath conceived:" when the heart is enticed, then luſt conceives in it.

The fourth is, the bringing forth of ſin in its actual accompliſhment; "when luſt hath conceived, it brings forth ſin." In all which there is a ſecret alluſion to an adulterous deviation from conjugal duties, and conceiving, or bringing forth children of whoredom and fornication.

The fifth is, the "finiſhing of ſin," the compleating of it, the filling up the meaſure of it, whereby the end originally deſigned by luſt, is brought about: "Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death." As luſt conceiving, naturally and neceſſarily bringeth forth ſin; ſo ſin, finiſhed, infallibly procureth eternal death.

The firſt of theſe relates to the mind; that drawn off, or drawn away by the deceit of ſin. The ſecond unto the affections; they are enticed or entangled. The third to the will, wherein ſin is conceived; the conſent of the will being the formal conception of actual ſin. The fourth to the converſation, wherein ſin is brought forth; it exerts itſelf in the lives and courſes of men. The fifth reſpects an obdurate courſe in ſinning, that finiſheth, conſummates, and ſhuts up the whole work of ſin, whereon enſues death, or eternal ruin.

I ſhall principally conſider the three firſt, wherein the main ſtrength of the deceit of ſin doth lie, and that, becauſe in believers, whoſe ſtate and condition is principally propoſed to conſideration, God is pleaſed, for the moſt part, graciouſly to prevent the fourth inſtance, or the bringing forth of actual ſins in their converſations: and the laſt, always and holy, of their being obdurate in courſe of ſin, to the finiſhing of it. What ways God, in his grace and faithfulneſs, makes uſe of to ſtifle the conceptions of ſin in the womb, and to hinder its actual production in the lives of men, muſt afterwards be ſpoken unto. The firſt three inſtances, then, we ſhall inſiſt upon fully, as thoſe wherein the principal concernment of believers, in this matter, doth lie.

The firſt thing which ſin is ſaid to do, working in a way of deceit, is to draw away, or to draw

off: whence a man is ſaid to be drawn off, or drawn away and diverted, namely, from attending unto that courſe of obedience and holineſs, which, in oppoſition unto ſin, and the law thereof, he is bound with diligence to attend unto.

Now it is the mind that this effect of the deceit of ſin is wrought upon. The mind, or underſtanding, as we have ſhewn, is the guiding, conducting faculty of the ſoul; it goes before in diſcerning, judging, and determining to make the way of moral actions fair and ſmooth to the will and affections. It is to the ſoul, what Moſes told his father-in-law that he might be to the people in the wilderneſs, "as eyes to guide them, and keep them from wandering in that deſolate place." It is the eye of the ſoul, without whoſe guidance the will and affections would perpetually wander in the wilderneſs of this world, according as any object, with an appearance of preſent good, did offer or preſent itſelf unto them.

The firſt thing therefore that ſin aims at, in its deceitful working, is to draw off and divert the mind from the diſcharge of its duty.

There are two things which belong unto the duty of the mind, in that ſpecial office which it hath in and about the obedience which God requireth.

Firſt, to keep itſelf, and the whole ſoul, in ſuch a frame and poſture, as may render it ready unto all duties of obedience, and watchful againſt all enticement unto the conception of ſin.

Secondly, In particular, carefully to a tend unto all particular actions, that they be performed as God requireth, for matter, manner, time and ſeaſon, agreeable unto his will, as alſo for the obviating all particular tenders of ſin in things forbidden. In theſe two things conſiſts the whole duty of the mind of a be iever. And from both

of them doth indwelling ſin endeavour to divert it, and draw it off.

The firſt of theſe is the duty of the mind, in reference unto the general frame and courſe of the whole ſoul; and hereof two things may be conſidered. Firſt, that it is founded in a due conſtant conſideration; 1. Of ourſelves, of ſin, and its vileneſs. 2. Of God, of his grace and goodneſs. And both theſe doth ſin labour to draw it off from. Secondly, in attending to thoſe duties which are ſuited to obviate the working of the law of ſin, in an eſpecial manner.

Firſt, It endeavours to draw it off from a due conſideration, apprehenſion, and ſenſibleneſs of its own vileneſs, and the danger wherewith it is attended. This, in the firſt place, we ſhall inſtance in. A due conſtant conſideration of ſin, in its nature, in all its aggravating circumſtances, in its end and tendency, eſpecially as repreſented in the blood and croſs of Chriſt, ought always to abide with us. "Know therefore and ſee, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God," Jer. ii. 19. Every ſin is a forſaking the Lord our God. If the heart know not, if it conſider not, that it is an evil thing and a bitter, evil in itſelf, bitter in its effects, fruit, and event, it will never be ſecured againſt it. Beſides, that frame of heart which is moſt accepted with God in any ſinner, is the humble, contrite, ſelf-abaſing frame: "Thus ſaith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit: to revive the ſpirit of the humble, to revive the ſpirit of the contrite ones," Iſa. lvii. 15. ſee alſo Luke xviii. 13, 14." This becomes a ſinner; no garment ſits ſo decently about him. "Be clothed with humility," 1 Pet. v. 5. ſaith

the apoſtle. It is that which becomes us, and it is the only ſafe frame. He that walketh humbly, walketh ſafely. This is the deſign of Peter's advice, "Paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear," 1 Epiſt. i. 17. After that he himſelf had miſcarried by another frame of mind, he gives this advice to all believers. It is not a bondage, ſervile fear, diſquieting and perplexing the ſoul, but ſuch a fear as may keep men conſtantly calling upon the Father, with reference unto the final judgment, that they may be preſerved from ſin, whereof they were in ſo great danger, which he adviſes them unto. "If ye call on the Father, who without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every man's work, paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear," This is the humble frame of ſoul; and how is this obtained? how is this preſerved? No otherwiſe but by a conſtant deep apprehenſion of evil, vileneſs and danger of ſin. So was it brought, ſo was it kept up, in the approved publican. "God be merciful," ſaith he, "to me a ſinner." Senſe of ſin kept him humble, and humility made way for his acceſs unto a teſtimony of the pardon of ſin.

And this is the great preſervative, through grace, from ſin, as we have an example in the inſtance of Joſeph. Upon the urgency of this great temptation, he recoils immediately into this frame of ſpirit: How, ſaith he, can I do this thing "and ſin againſt God," Gen. xxxix. 9. A conſtant ſteady ſenſe of the evil of ſin, gives him ſuch preſervation, that he ventures liberty and life in oppoſition to it. To fear ſin, is to fear the Lord; ſo the holy man tells us that they are the ſame: "The fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is underſtanding," Job xxviii. 28.

This therefore, in the firſt place, in general, doth the law of ſin put forth its deceit about, namely, to draw the mind from this frame, which is the ſtrongeſt fort of the ſouls defence and ſecurity. It labours to divert the mind from a due apprehenſion of the vileneſs, abomination, and danger of ſin. It ſecretly and inſenſibly inſinuates, leſſening, excuſing, extenuating thoughts of it; or it draws it off from pondering upon it, from being converſant about it, in its thoughts, ſo much as it ought and formerly hath been. And if, after the heart of a man hath, through the word, ſpirit, and grace of Chriſt, been made tender, ſoft, deeply ſenſible of ſin, it becomes, on any account, or by any means whatever, to have leſs, fewer, ſlighter, or leſs affecting thoughts of it, or about it, the mind of that man is drawn away by the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

There are two ways amongſt others, whereby the law of ſin endeavours deceitfully to draw off the mind from this duty, and frame enſuing thereon.

Firſt, It doth it by an horrible abuſe of goſpel grace. There is, in the goſpel, a remedy provided againſt the whole evil of ſin, the filth, the guilt of it, with all its dangerous conſequents. It is the doctrine of the deliverance of the ſouls of men from ſin and death. A diſcovery of the gracious will of God towards ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt. What now is the genuine tendency of this doctrine, of this diſcovery of grace, and what ought we to uſe it and improve it unto? This the apoſtle declares; "The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world," Tit. ii. 11, 12. This it teacheth, this we ought to learn of it, and by it.

Hence univerſal holineſs is called, a "converſation that becometh the goſpel," Phil. i. 27. It becomes it, as that which is anſwerable unto its end, aim, and deſign, as that which it requires, and which it ought to be improved unto. And accordingly it doth produce this effect, where the word of it is received and preſerved in a ſaving light, Rom. xii. 2. Epheſ. iv. 20—24. But herein doth the deceit of ſin interpoſe itſelf. It ſeparates between the doctrine of grace, and the uſe and end of it. It ſtays upon its notions, and intercepts its influences, in its proper application. From the doctrine of the aſſured pardon of ſin, it inſinuates a regardleſneſs of ſin. God in Chriſt makes the propoſition, and ſatan and ſin make the concluſion. For that the deceitfulneſs of ſin is apt to plead unto a regardleſneſs of it, from the grace of God whereby it is pardoned, the apoſtle declares, in his reproof and deteſtation of ſuch an inſinuation: "What ſhall we ſay then, ſhall we continue in ſin that grace may abound? God forbid," Rom. vi. 1. Men's deceitful hearts, ſaith he, are apt to make that concluſion; but far be it from us, that we ſhould give any entertainment unto it. But yet, that ſome have evidently improved that deceit unto their own eternal ruin, Jude declares: "Ungodly men, turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs," Jude ver. 4. And we have had dreadful inſtances of it, in the days of temptation wherein we have lived.

Indeed, in oppoſition unto this deceit, lies much of the wiſdom of faith, and power of goſpel-grace. When the mind is fully poſſeſſed with, and caſt habitually and firmly into the mould of the notion and doctrine of goſpel-truth, about the full and free forgiveneſs of all ſins in the blood of Chriſt, then to be able to keep the heart always in a deep humbling ſenſe of ſin, abhorrency

of it, and ſelf-abaſement for it, is a great effect of goſpel-wiſdom and grace. This is the trial and touchſtone of goſpel-light. If it keep the heart ſenſible of ſin, humble, lowly, and broken on that account; if it teach us to water a free pardon with tears, to deteſt forgiven ſin, to watch diligently for the ruin of that, which we are yet aſſured ſhall never ruin us, it is divine, from above, of the ſpirit of grace. If it ſecretly and inſenſibly make men looſe and ſlight in their thoughts about ſin, it is adulterate, ſelfiſh, falſe. If it will be all, anſwer all ends, it is nothing.

Hence it comes to paſs, that ſometimes we ſee men walking in a bondage frame of ſpirit all their days, low in their light, mean in their apprehenſions of grace, ſo that it is hard to diſcern which covenant, in their principles, they belong unto: whether they are under the law, or under grace; yet walk with a more conſcientious tenderneſs of ſinning, than many who are advanced into higher decrees of light and knowledge than they. Not that the ſaving light of the goſpel, is not the only principle of ſaving holineſs and obedience; but that, through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, it is variouſly abuſed, to countenance the ſoul in manifold neglect of duties, and to draw off the mind from a due conſideration of the nature, deſert, and danger of ſin. And this is done ſeveral ways.

Firſt, the ſoul having frequent need of relief by goſpel-grace againſt a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, and accuſation of the law, comes at length to make it a common and ordinary thing, and ſuch as may be ſlightly performed. Having found a good medicine for its wounds, and ſuch as it hath had experience of its efficacy, it comes to apply it ſlightly, and rather ſkinneth over, than cureth, its ſores. A little leſs earneſtneſs, a little leſs diligence,

ſerves every time, until the ſoul, it may be, begins to ſecure itſelf of pardon of courſe. And this tends directly to draw off the mind from its conſtant and univerſal watchfulneſs againſt ſin. He whoſe light hath made his way of acceſs plain for the obtaining of pardon, if he be not very watchful, he is far more apt to become overly, formal, and careleſs in his work, than he who, by reaſon of miſts and darkneſs, beats about to find his way aright to the throne of grace. As a man that hath often travelled a road, paſſeth on without regard or inquiry; but he who is a ſtranger unto it, obſerving all turnings, and inquiring of all paſſengers, ſecures his journey beyond the other.

Secondly, The deceitfulneſs of ſin takes advantage from the doctrine of grace, by many ways and means to extend the bounds of the ſoul's liberty, beyond what God hath aſſigned unto it. Some have never thought themſelves free from a legal bondage-frame, until they have been brought into the confines of ſenſuality, and ſome into the depths of it. How often will ſin plead this ſtrictneſs, this exactneſs, this ſolicitude, is no ways needful; relief is provided in the goſpel againſt ſuch things. Would you live as though there were no need of the goſpel? as though pardon of ſin were to no purpoſe? But concerning theſe pleas of ſin from goſpel-grace, we ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly hereafter.

Thirdly, In times of temptation this deceitfulneſs of ſin will argue expreſsly for ſin, from goſpel-grace; at leaſt it will plead for theſe two things;

Firſt, That there is no need of ſuch a tenacious ſevere contending againſt it, as the principle of the new creature is fixed on. If it cannot divert the ſoul, or mind, wholly from attending unto

temptations, to oppoſe them, yet it will endeavour to draw them off, as to the manner of their attendance. They need not uſe that diligence, which at firſt the ſoul apprehends to be neceſſary.

Secondly, It will be tendering relief, as to the event of ſin, that it ſhall not turn to the ruin or deſtruction of the ſoul, becauſe it is, it will, or it may be, pardoned by the grace of the goſpel. And this is true; this is the great and only relief of the ſoul againſt ſin, the guilt whereof it hath contracted already; the bleſſed and only remedy for a guilty ſoul. But when it is pleaded, and remembered by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, in compliance with temptation unto ſin, then it is poiſon; poiſon is mixed in every drop of this balſam, to the danger, if not death, of the ſoul. And this is the firſt way whereby the deceitfulneſs of ſin draws off the mind from a due attendance unto that ſenſe of its vileneſs, which alone is able to keep it in that humble, ſelf-abaſed frame, that is acceptable with God. It makes the mind careleſs, as though its work were needleſs, becauſe of the abounding of grace; which is a ſoldier's neglect of his ſtation, truſting to a reſerve, provided indeed only in caſe of keeping his own proper place.

Secondly, Sin takes advantage to work by its deceit in this matter, of drawing off the mind from a due ſenſe of it, from the ſtate and condition of men in the world. I ſhall give only one inſtance of its procedure in this kind. Men, in their younger days, have naturally their affections more quick, vigorous, and active, more ſenſibly working in them, than afterwards. They do, as to their ſenſible working and operation, naturally decay, and many things befal men, in their lives, that take off the edge and keenneſs of them. But as men loſe in their affections, if they are not befotted in ſenſuality, or by the corruptions that are

in the world through luſt, they grow and improve in their underſtandings, reſolutions, and judgments. Hence it is, that if what had place formerly in their affections, do not take place in their minds and judgments, they utterly loſe them, they have no more place in their ſouls. Thus men have no regard for, yea, they utterly deſpiſe, thoſe things which their affections were ſet upon with delight, and greedineſs in their childhood. But if they are things that, by any means, come to be fixed in their minds and judgments, they continue a high eſteem for them, and do cleave as cloſe unto them as they did when their affections were more vigorous; only, as it were, they have changed their ſeat in the ſoul. It is thus in things ſpiritual; the firſt and chiefeſt ſeat of the ſenſibleneſs of ſin, is in the affections; as theſe, in natural youth, are great and large, ſo are they ſpiritually in ſpiritual youth: "I remember the kindneſs of thy youth, the love of thine eſpouſals," Jer. ii. 2. Beſides, ſuch perſons are newly come off from their convictions, wherein they have been cut to the heart, and ſo made tender. Whatever touches a wound is thoroughly felt: ſo doth the guilt of ſin, before the wound given by conviction be thoroughly cured. But now, when affections begin to decay naturally, they begin to decay alſo as to their ſenſible actions and motions in things ſpiritual. Although they improve in grace, yet they may decay in ſenſe. At leaſt ſpiritual ſenſe is not radically in them, but only by way of communication. Now in theſe decays, if the ſoul take not care to fix a deep ſenſe of ſin on the mind and judgment, thereby perpetually to affect the heart and affections, it will decay. And here the deceit of the law of ſin interpoſeth itſelf. It ſuffers a ſenſe of ſin to decay in the affections, and diverts the mind

from entertaining a due, conſtant, fixed conſideration of it. We may conſider this a little, in perſons that never make a progreſs in the ways of God beyond conviction. How ſenſible of ſin will they be for a ſeaſon! How will they then mourn and weep under a ſenſe of the guilt of it! How will they cordially and heartily reſolve againſt it! Affections are vigorous, and, as it were, bear rule in their ſouls. But they are like an herb, that will flouriſh a day or two with watering, although it have no root. For, a while after, we ſee that theſe men, the more experience they have had of ſin, the leſs they are afraid of it, as the wiſe man intimates; Eccleſ. viii. 11. and at length they come to be the greateſt contemners of ſin in the world. No ſinner like him that hath ſinned away his convictions of ſin. What is the reaſon of this? ſenſe of ſin was, in their convictions, fixed on their affections; as it decayed in them, they took no care to have it deeply and graciouſly fixed on their minds. This the deceitfulneſs of ſin deprived them of, and ſo ruined their ſouls. In ſome meaſure it is ſo with believers. If, as the ſenſibleneſs of the affections decay, if, as they grow heavy and obtuſe, great wiſdom and grace be not uſed, to fix a due ſenſe of ſin upon the mind, and judgment, which may provoke, excite, enliven, and ſtir up the affections every day, great decays will enſue. At firſt, ſorrow, trouble, grief, fear, affected the mind, and would give it no reſt. If, afterwards, the mind do not affect the heart with ſorrow and grief, the whole will be caſt out, and the ſoul be in danger of being hardened. And theſe are ſome of the ways whereby the deceit of ſin diverts the mind from the firſt part of its ſafe, preſerving frame, or draws it off from its conſtant watchfulneſs againſt ſin, and all the effects of it.

The ſecond part of this general duty of the mind, is to keep the ſoul unto a conſtant, holy conſideration of God and his grace. This evidently lies at the ſpring-head of goſpel-obedience. The way whereby ſin draws off the mind from this part of its duty is open, and known ſufficiently, though not ſufficiently watched againſt. Now this the ſcripture every where declares to be the filling of the minds of men with earthly things. This it placeth in direct oppoſition unto that heavenly frame of the mind, which is the ſpring of goſpel obedience: "Set your affections," or ſet your minds, "on things above, not on things on the earth," Col. iii. 2. As if he had ſaid, on both together, you cannot be ſet or fixed, ſo as principally and chiefly to mind them both. And the affections to one and the other, proceeding from theſe different principles of minding the one and the other, are oppoſed, as directly inconſiſtent: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. And acting, in a courſe ſuitable unto theſe affections, are propoſed alſo as contrary; "You cannot ſerve God and Mammon." Theſe are two maſters, whom no man can ſerve at the ſame time, to the ſatisfaction of both. Every inordinate minding, then, of earthly things, is oppoſed unto that frame, wherein our minds ought to be fixed on God, and his grace, in a courſe of goſpel-obedience.

Several ways there are, whereby the deceitfulneſs of ſin draws off the mind in this particular; but the chief of them is by preſſing theſe things on the mind under the notion of things lawful, and, it may be, neceſſary. So all thoſe who excuſe themſelves, in the parable, from coming in to the marriage-feaſt of the goſpel, did it on the account

of their being engaged in their lawful callings. One about his farm, another his oxen, the means whereby he ploughed in this world. By this plea, were the minds of men drawn off from that frame of heavenlineſs which is required to our walking with God, and the rules of not loving the world, or uſing it, as if we uſed it not, are hereby neglected. What wiſdom, what watchfulneſs, what ſerious, frequent trial and examination of ourſelves is required, to keep our hearts and minds in an heavenly frame, in the uſe and purſuit of earthly things, is not my preſent buſineſs to declare. This is evident, that the engine whereby the deceit of ſin draws off, and turns aſide the mind, in this matter, is the pretence of the lawfulneſs of things, about which it would have it exerciſe itſelf, againſt which very few are armed with ſufficient diligence, wiſdom, and ſkill. And this is the firſt and moſt general attempt that indwelling ſin makes upon the ſoul by deceit: it draws away the mind from a diligent attention unto its courſe, in a due ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and a due and conſtant conſideration of God, and his grace.

CHAP. IX.

The deceit of ſin, in drawing off the mind from a due attendance unto eſpecial duties of obedience, inſtanced in meditation and prayer.

HOW ſin, by its deceit endeavours to draw off the mind from attending unto that holy frame in walking with God, wherein the ſoul

ought to be preſerved, hath been declared. Proceed we now to ſhew, how it doth the ſame work, in reference unto thoſe eſpecial duties, by which the deſigns, workings, and prevalency of it may, in an eſpecial manner, be obviated and prevented. Sin, indeed, maintains an enmity againſt all duties of obedience; or, rather with God in them. "When I would do good," ſaith the apoſtle, "evil is preſent with me." Whenever I would do good, or what good ſoever I would do, that is, ſpiritually good, good in reference unto God, it is preſent with me, to hinder me from it, to oppoſe me in it. And, on the other ſide, all duties of obedience do lie directly againſt the actings of the law of ſin. For as the fleſh, in all its actings, luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo the ſpirit, in all its actings, luſteth againſt the fleſh. And, therefore, every duty performed in the ſtrength and grace of the ſpirit, is contrary to the law of ſin. "If ye by the ſpirit do mortify the deeds of the fleſh," Rom. viii. 13. Actings of the ſpirit of grace in duties, doth this work. Theſe two are contrary. But yet there are ſome duties, which, in their own nature, and by God's appointment, have a peculiar influence unto the weakening and ſubduing the whole law of ſin in its very principles, and chiefeſt ſtrengths: and theſe the mind of a believer ought principally, in his whole courſe, to attend unto; and theſe doth ſin, in its deceit, endeavour principally, to draw off the mind from. As in diſeaſes of the body, ſome remedies, they ſay, have a ſpecifick quality againſt diſtempers; ſo in this diſeaſe of the ſoul, there are ſome duties that have an eſpecial virtue againſt this ſinful diſtemper. I ſhall not inſiſt on many of them, but inſtance only in two, which ſeem to me to be of this nature; namely, that by God's deſignation, they have a ſpecial tendency towards the ruin of the

law of ſin. And then we ſhall ſhew the ways, methods and means, which the law of ſin uſeth, to divert the mind from a due attendance unto them. Now theſe duties are, firſt, prayer, eſpecially private prayer: and, ſecondly, meditation. I put them together, becauſe they much agree in their general nature and end, differing only in the manner of their performance. For, by meditation, I intend, mediating upon what reſpect and ſuitableneſs there is between the word and our own hearts; to this end, that they may be brought to a more exact conformity. It is our pondering on the truth as it is in Jeſus, to find out the image and repreſentation of it in our own hearts; and ſo it hath the ſame intent with prayer, which is to bring our ſouls into a frame, in all things anſwering the mind and will of God. They are as the blood and ſpirits in the veins, that have the ſame life, motion and uſe. But yet, becauſe perſons are generally at a great loſs in this duty of meditation, having declared it to be of ſo great efficacy, for the controuling of the actings of the law of ſin, I ſhall, in our paſſage, give briefly two or three rules for the directing of believers to a right performance of this great duty: and they are theſe.

Firſt, Meditate of God with God; that is, when we would undertake thoughts and meditations of God, his excellencies, his properties, his glory, his majeſty, his love, his goodneſs, let it be done in a way of ſpeaking unto God, in a deep humiliation and abaſement of our ſouls before him. This will fix the mind, and draw it forth, from one thing to another, to give glory unto God, in a due manner and affect the ſoul until it be brought into that holy admiration of God, and delight in him, which is acceptable unto him.

My meaning is, that it be done in a way of prayer and praiſe, ſpeaking unto God.

Secondly, Meditate on the word in the word: that is, in the reading of it, conſider the ſenſe in the particular paſſages we inſiſt upon, looking to God for help, guidance and direction, in the diſcovery of his mind and will therein, and then labour to have your hearts affected with it.

Thirdly, What we come ſhort of in evenneſs and conſtancy in our thoughts in theſe things, let it be made up in frequency. Some are diſcouraged, becauſe their minds do not regularly ſupply them with thoughts to carry on their meditations through the weakneſs, or imperfection of their inventions. Let this be ſupplied by frequent returns of the mind unto the ſubject propoſed to be mediated upon, whereby new ſenſes will ſtill be ſupplied unto it. But this by the way.

Theſe duties, I ſay, amongſt others (for we have only choſen them for an inſtance, not excluding ſome others from the ſame place, office and uſefulneſs with them) do make an eſpecial oppoſition to the very being and life of indwelling ſin, or rather faith, in them, doth ſo. They are perpetually deſigning its utter ruin. I ſhall therefore, upon this inſtance, in the purſuit of our preſent purpoſe, do theſe two things;

Firſt, Shew the ſuitableneſs and uſefulneſs of this duty, or theſe duties, as I ſhall handle them jointly, unto the ruining of ſin.

Secondly, Shew the means whereby the deceitfulneſs of ſin endeavours to draw off the mind from a due attendance unto them.

For the firſt, obſerve.

Firſt, That it is proper work of the ſoul, in this duty, to conſider all the ſecret workings and actings of ſin, what advantages it hath got, what

temptations it is in conjunction withal, what harm it hath already done, and what it is yet farther ready to do. Hence David gives that title unto one of his prayers, Pſal. cii. "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is over-whelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." I ſpeak of that prayer, which is attended with a due conſideration of all the wants, ſtraits and emergencies of the ſoul. Without this, prayer is not prayer; that is, whatever ſhew or appearance of that duty it hath, it is no way uſeful, either to the glory of God, or the good of the ſouls of men. A cloud it is without water, driven by the wind of the breath of men. Nor was there ever any more preſent and effectual poiſon for ſouls found out, than the binding of them unto a conſtant form and uſage of I know not what words in their prayers and ſupplications, which themſelves do not underſtand. Blind men ſo in their trades, or in their buſineſſes in this world, and they will quickly find the effect of it. By this means, they are diſenabled from any due conſideration of what, at preſent, is good for them, or evil unto them, without which, to what uſe can prayer ſerve, but to mock God, and delude men's own ſouls. But in this kind of prayer, which we inſiſt on, the ſpirit of God falls in to give us his aſſiſtance, and that in this very matter, of finding out and diſcovering the moſt ſecret actings and workings of the law of ſin. "We know not what to pray for as we ought, but he helps our infirmities," Rom. viii. 26. He diſcovers our wants unto us, and wherein chiefly we ſtand in need of help and relief. And we find it by daily experience, that in prayer, believers are led into ſuch diſcoveries and convictions of the ſecret deceitful work of ſin in their hearts, as no conſiderations could ever have led them into. So Da-

vid, deſigning the confeſſion of his actual ſin, Pſal. li. having his wound, in his prayer, ſearched by the ſkilful hand of the ſpirit of God, he had a diſcovery made him, of the root of all his miſcarriages, in his original corruption, ver. 5. The ſpirit, in this duty, is as the candle of the Lord unto the ſoul, enabling it to ſearch all the inward parts of the belly. It gives a holy ſpiritual light into the mind, enabling it to ſearch the deep and dark receſſes of the heart, to find out the ſubtile and deceitful machinations, figments, and imaginati ns of the law of ſin therein. Whatever notion there be of it, whatever power and prevalency in it, it is laid hand on, apprehended, brought into the preſence of God, judged, condemned, bewailed. And what can poſſibly be more effectual for its ruin and deſtruction? For, together with its diſcovery, application is made unto all that relief which, in Jeſus Chriſt, is provided againſt it, all ways and means whereby it may be ruined. Hence it is the duty of the mind, "To watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. To attend diligently unto the eſtate of our ſouls, and to deal fervently and effectually with God about it. The like alſo may be ſaid of meditation, wiſely managed unto its proper end.

Secondly, In this duty, there is wrought upon the heart, a deep, full ſenſe of the vileneſs of ſin, with a conſtant, renewed deteſtation of it; which, if any thing, undoubtedly tends to its ruin. This is one deſign of prayer, one end of the ſoul in it, namely, to draw forth ſin, to ſet it in order, to preſent ſin unto itſelf in its vileneſs, abomination, and aggravating circumſtances, that it may be loathed, abhorred, and caſt away as a filthy thing, Iſa. xxx. 22. He that pleads with God for ſin's remiſſion, pleads alſo with his own heart for its deteſtation, Hoſ. xiv. 3. Herein alſo ſin is

judged in the name of God; for the ſoul, in its confeſſion ſubſcribes unto God's deteſtation of it, and the ſentence of his law againſt it. There is, indeed, a courſe of theſe duties, which convinced perſons do give up themſelves unto, as a mere covert to their luſts: they cannot ſin quietly, unleſs they perform duty conſtantly. But that prayer we ſpeak of, is a thing of another nature; a thing that will allow no compoſition with ſin, much leſs will ſerve the ends of the deceit of it, as the other formal prayer doth. It will not be bribed into a ſecret compliance with any of the enemies of God, or the ſoul, no not for a moment. And hence it is, that oftentimes, in this duty, the heart is raiſed to the moſt ſincere, effectual ſenſe of ſin and deteſtation of it, that the ſoul ever obtains in its whole courſe of obedience. And this evidently tends alſo to the weakening and ruin of the law of ſin.

Thirdly, This is the way appointed and bleſſed of God, to obtain ſtrength and power againſt ſin. "Doth any man lack, let him aſk of God," Jam. 1. 5. Prayer is the way of obtaining from God, by Chriſt, a ſupply of all our wants, aſſiſtance againſt all oppoſition, eſpecially that which is made againſt us by ſin. This, I ſuppoſe, need not to be inſiſted on; it is, in the notion and practice, clear to every believer. It is that wherein we call, and upon which the Lord Jeſus comes in to our ſuccour, with ſuitable help, in a time of need.

Fourthly, Faith in prayer countermines all the workings of the deceit of ſin; and that becauſe the ſoul doth, therein, conſtantly engage itſelf unto God, to oppoſe all ſin whatſoever. "I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments," Pſal. cxix. 106. This is the language of every gracious ſoul in its

addreſſes unto God: the inmoſt parts thereof engage themſelves to God, to cleave to him in all things, and to oppoſe ſin in all things. He that cannot do this, cannot pray. To pray with any other frame, is to flatter God with our lips, which he abhorreth. And this exceedingly helps a believer, in purſuing ſin unto its ruin. For,

Firſt, If there be any ſecret luſt that lies lurking in the heart, he will find it either riſing up againſt this engagement, or uſing its artifices to ſecure itſelf from it. And hereby it is diſcovered; and the conviction of the heart concerning its evil, furthered and ſtrengthened. Sin makes the moſt certain diſcovery of itſelf, and never more evidently, than when it is moſt ſeverely purſued. Luſts in men are compared to hurtful and noiſome beaſts, or men themſelves are ſo, becauſe of their luſts, Iſa. xi. 6, 7. Now ſuch beaſts uſe themſelves to their dens and coverts, and never diſcover themſelves, at leaſt ſo much in their proper nature and rage, as when they are moſt earneſtly purſued. And ſo it is with ſin and corruption in the heart.

Secondly, If any ſin be prevalent in the ſoul, it will weaken it, and take it off from the univerſality of this engagement unto God, it will breed a tergiverſation unto it, a ſlightneſs in it. Now, when this is obſerved, it will exceedingly awaken a gracious ſoul, and ſtir it up to look about it. As a ſpontaneous laſſitude, or a cauſeleſs wearineſs and indiſpoſition of the body, is looked on as the ſign of an approaching fever, or ſome dangerous diſtemper, which ſtirs up men to uſe a timely and vigorous prevention, that they be not ſeized upon by it; ſo is it in this caſe. When the ſoul of a believer finds in itſelf an indiſpoſition to make fervent, ſincere engagements of univerſal holineſs unto God, it knows that there is ſome

prevalent diſtemper in it, finds the place of it, and ſets itſelf againſt it.

Thirdly, Whilſt the ſoul can thus conſtantly engage itſelf unto God, it is certain that ſin can riſe unto no ruinous prevalency. Yea, it is a conqueſt over ſin, a moſt conſiderable conqueſt, when the ſoul doth fully and clearly, without any ſecret reſerve, come off with alacrity and reſolutions in ſuch an engagement; as Pſal. xviii. 23. And it may, upon ſuch a ſucceſs, triumph in the grace of God, and have good hope, through faith, that it ſhall have a final conqueſt, and what it ſo reſolves, ſhall be done; that it hath decreed a thing, and it ſhall be eſtabliſhed. And this tends to the diſappointment, yea, to the ruin, of the law of ſin.

Fourthly, If the heart be not deceived by curſed hypocriſy, this engagement unto God will greatly influence it unto a peculiar diligence and watchfulneſs againſt all ſin. There is no greater evidence of hypocriſy, then to have the heart ſay, like the whoriſh woman, "I have paid my vows, now I may take myſelf unto my ſin," Prov. vii. 14. or to be negligent about ſin, as being ſatisfied that it hath prayed againſt it. It is otherwiſe in a gracious ſoul. Senſe and conſcience of engagements againſt ſin, made to God, do make it univerſally watchful againſt all its motions and operations. On theſe, and ſundry other accounts, doth faith in this duty exert itſelf peculiarly, to the weakening of the power, and ſtopping of the progreſs of the law of ſin.

If then the mind be diligent in its watch and charge, to preſerve the ſoul from the efficacy of ſin, it will carefully attend unto this duty, and the due performance of it, which is of ſuch ſingular advantage, unto its end and purpoſe. Here, therefore, ſin puts forth its deceit in its own de-

ſence: it labours to divert and draw off the mind from attending unto this and the like duties. And there are, among others, three engines, three ways and means, whereby it attempts the accompliſhment of its deſign.

Firſt, It makes advantage of its wearineſs unto the fleſh. There is an averſation, as hath been declared, in the law of ſin, unto all immediate communion with God. Now this duty is ſuch; there is nothing accompanieth it, whereby the carnal part of the ſoul may be gratified, or ſatisfied, as there may be ſomewhat of that nature in moſt public duties, in moſt that a man can do, beyond pure acts of faith and love. No relief, or advantage, then coming in by it, but what is purely ſpiritual, it becomes wearisome, burthenſome to fleſh and blood. It is like travelling alone, without companion or diverſion, which makes the way ſeem long, but brings the paſſenger with moſt ſpeed to his journey's end. So our Saviour declares, when expecting his diſciples, according to their duty and preſent diſtreſs, ſhould have been engaged in this work, he found them faſt aſleep, "The ſpirit," ſaith he, "indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak," Matth. xxvi. 41. and out of that weakneſs grew their indiſpoſition unto, and wearineſs of, their duty. So God complains of his people: "Thou haſt been weary of me," Iſa. xliii. 22. And it may come at length, unto that height which is expreſſed, "Ye have ſaid, behold what a wearineſs is it, and ye have ſnuffed at it, ſaith the Lord of hoſts," Mal. i. 13. The Jews ſuppoſe, that it was the language of men, when they brought their offerings or ſacrifices on their ſhoulders, which they pretended wearied them, and they panted and blowed, as men ready to faint under them, when they brought only the torn, and the lame, and the ſick. But ſo is this

duty oftentimes to the fleſh. And this the deceitfulneſs of ſin makes uſe of, to draw the heart, by inſenſible degrees, from a conſtant attendance unto it. It puts in for the relief of the weak and weary fleſh. There is a compliance between ſpiritual fleſh, and natural fleſh, in this matter; they help one another, and an averſation unto this duty, is the effect of their compliance. So it was in the ſpouſe, Cant. v. 2, 3. ſhe was aſleep, drowſing in her ſpiritual condition, and pleads her natural unfitneſs to rouſe herſelf from that ſtate. If the mind be not diligently watchful to prevent inſinuations from hence, if it dwell not conſtantly on thoſe conſiderations which evidence an attendance unto this duty to be indiſpenſible, if it ſtir not up the principle of grace in the heart, to retain its rule and ſovereignty, and not to be dallied withal by fooliſh pretences, it will be drawn off; which is the effect aimed at.

Secondly, The deceitfulneſs of ſin makes uſe of corrupt reaſonings, taken from the preſſing and urging occaſions of life. Should we, ſays it, in the heart, attend ſtrictly unto all duties in this kind, we ſhould neglect our principal occaſions, and be uſeleſs unto ourſelves and others in the world. And on this general account, particular buſineſſes diſpoſſeſs particular duties, from their due place and time. Men have not leiſure to glorify God, and ſave their own ſouls. It is certain, that God gives us time enough for all that he requires of us, in any kind, in this world. No duties need to juſtle one another, I mean conſtantly. Eſpecial occaſions muſt be determined according unto eſpecial circumſtances. But, if in any thing we take more upon us than we have time well to perform it in, without robbing God of that which is due to him, and our own ſouls, this God calls not unto, this he bleſſeth us not in. It is more

tolerable, that our duties of holineſs and regard to God, ſhould intrench upon the duties of our callings and employments in this world, than the contrary; and yet, neither doth God require this at our hands in an ordinary manner or courſe. How little then, will he bear with that, which evidently is ſo much worſe, upon all accounts whatever. But yet, through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, thus are the ſouls of men beguiled. By ſeveral degrees they are, at length, driven from their duty.

Thirdly, It deals with the mind, to draw it off from its attendance unto this duty, by a tender of a compenſation, to be made in and by other duties. As Saul thought to compenſate his diſobedience by ſacrifice. May not the ſame duty performed in public, or in the family, ſuffice? And if the ſoul be ſo fooliſh as not to anſwer, thoſe things ought to be done, and this not to be left undone; it may be enſnared and deceived. For, beſides a command unto it, namely, that we ſhould perſonally watch unto prayer; there is, as hath been declared, ſundry advantages in this duty, ſo performed, againſt the deceit and efficacy of ſin, which, in the moſt public attendance unto it, it hath not. Theſe ſin ſtrives to deprive the ſoul of by this commutation, which, by its corrupt reaſonings it tenders unto it.

Fourthly, I may add here, that which hath place in all the workings of ſin by deceit, namely, its feeding the ſoul with promiſes and purpoſes of a more diligent attendance unto this duty, when occaſions will permit. By this means, it brings the ſoul to ſay unto its convictions of duty, as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient ſeaſon, I will call for thee," Acts xxiv. 25. And by this means, oftentimes,

the preſent ſeaſon and time, which alone is ours, is loſt irrecoverable.

Theſe are ſome of the ways and means, whereby the deceit of ſin endeavours to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto this duty, which is ſo peculiarly ſuited to prevent its progreſs and prevalency, and which aims ſo directly and immediately at its ruin. I might inſtance alſo in other duties of the like tendency. But this may ſuffice, to diſcover the nature of this part of the deceit of ſin. And this is the firſt way, whereby it makes way for the farther entangling of the affections, and the conception of ſin. When ſin hath wrought this effect on any one, he is ſaid to be drawn away, to be diverted from what, in his mind, he ought conſtantly to attend unto, in his walking before the Lord.

And this will inſtruct us to ſee and diſcern where lies the beginning of our declenſions and failings in the ways of God, and that, either as to our general courſe, or as to our attendance unto eſpecial duties. And this is of great importance and concernment unto us. When the beginnings and occaſions of a ſickneſs, or diſtemper of body, are known, it is a great advantage to direct in and unto the cure of it. God, to recall Sion to himſelf ſhews her where was the beginning of her ſin, Micah i. 13. Now this is that which, for the moſt part, is the beginning of ſin unto us, even the drawing off the mind from a due attendance, in all things, unto the diſcharge of its duty. The principal care and charge of the ſoul lies on the mind; and if that fail of its duty, the whole is betrayed, either as unto its general frame, or as unto particular miſcarriages. The failing of the mind, is like the failing of the watchman in Ezekiel, the whole is loſt by his neglect. This, therefore, in that ſelf-ſcrutiny and ſearch which we are

called unto, we are moſt diligently to inquire after. God doth not look at what duties we perform, as to their number and tale, or as to their nature merely, but whether we do them with that attention of mind and ſpirit which he requireth. Many men perform duties in a road, or courſe, and do not, as it were, ſo much as think of them. Their minds are filled with other things, only duty takes up ſo much of their time. This is but an endeavour to mock God, and deceive their own ſouls. Would you therefore take the true meaſure of yourſelves, conſider how it is with you, as to the duty of your minds which we have inquired after. Conſider whether, by any of the deceits mentioned, you have not been diverted and drawn away: and if there be any decays upon you, in any kind, you will find that there hath been the beginning of them. By one way or other, your minds have been made heedleſs, regardleſs, ſlothful, uncertain, being beguiled and drawn off from their duty. Conſider the charge, Prov. iv. 23—27. May not ſuch a ſoul ſay, If I had attended more diligently, if I had conſidered more wiſely the vile nature of ſin, if I had not ſuffered my mind to be poſſeſſed with vain hopes and fooliſh imaginations, by a curſed abuſe of goſpel-grace; if I had not permitted it to be filled with the things of the world, and to become negligent in attending unto eſpecial duties, I had not, at this day, been thus ſick, weak, thriftleſs, wounded, decayed, defiled. My careleſs, my deceived mind, hath been the beginning of ſin and tranſgreſſion unto my ſoul. And this diſcovery will direct the ſoul unto a ſuitable way for its healing and recovery, which will never be effected by a multiplying of particular duties but by a reſtoring of the mind, Pſal. xxiii. 3.

And this alſo doth hence appear to be the great means of preſerving our ſouls, both as unto their

general frame, and particular duties, according to the mind and will of God: namely, to endeavour after a ſound and ſteadfaſt mind. It is a ſignal grace to have the ſpirit of power, and love, and of a ſound mind, 2 Tim. i. 7. A ſtable, ſolid, reſolved mind in the things of God, not eaſily moved, diverted, changed, not drawn aſide; a mind not apt to hearken after corrupt reaſonings, vain inſinuations, or pretences to draw it off from its duty: this is that which the apoſtle exhorts believers unto: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ſteadfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. The ſteadfaſtneſs of our minds, abiding in their duty is the cauſe of all our unmoveableneſs, and fruitfulneſs in obedience. And ſo Peter tells us, that thoſe who are, by any means, led away or enticed, "they fall from their own ſteadfaſtneſs," 2 Pet. iii. 7. And the great blame that is laid upon backſliders, is, that they are not ſteadfaſt: Their ſpirit was not ſteadfaſt, Pſal. lxxviii. 37. For if the ſoul be ſafe, unleſs the mind be drawn off from its duty, the ſoundneſs and ſteadfaſtneſs of the mind, is its great preſervative. And there are three parts of this ſteadfaſtneſs of the mind. Firſt, a full purpoſe of cleaving to God in all things. Secondly, a daily renovation and quickening of the heart, unto a diſcharge of this purpoſe. Thirdly, Reſolutions againſt all dalliance, or parlies, about negligences in that diſcharge; which are not here to be ſpoken unto.

CHAP. X.

The deceit of ſin, in drawing off the mind from its attendance unto particular duties, farther diſcovered. Several things required in the mind of believers, with reſpect unto particular duties of obedience. The actings of ſin, in a way of deceit, to divert the mind from them.

WE have not, as yet, brought unto an iſſue, the firſt way of the working of the deceit of ſin; namely, in its drawing away of the mind from the diſcharge of its duty, which we inſiſt upon the longer, upon a double account.

Firſt, Becauſe of its importance and concernment. If the mind be drawn off, if it be tainted, weakened, turned aſide from a due and ſtrict attendance unto its charge and office, the whole ſoul, will and affections, are certainly entangled, and draw into ſin; as hath been in part declared, and will afterwards further appear. This we ought, therefore, to give diligent heed unto, which is the deſign of the apoſtle exhortation: "Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip," Heb. ii. 1. It is a failure of our minds, by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, in loſing the life, power, ſenſe and impreſſion of the word; which he cautions us againſt. And there is no way to prevent it, but by giving of moſt earneſt heed unto the things which we have heard, which expreſſeth the whole duty of our minds, in attending unto obedience.

Secondly, Becauſe the actings and workings of the mind being ſpiritual, are ſuch as the con-

ſcience, unleſs clearly enlightened, and duly excited and ſtirred up, is not affected withal, ſo as to take due notice of them. Conſcience is not apt to exerciſe reflex acts upon the mind's failures, as principally reſpecting the acts of the whole ſoul. When the affections are entangled with ſin of which afterwards or the will begins to conceive it, by its expreſs conſent, conſcience is apt to make an uproar in the ſoul, and to give it no reſt or quiet, until the ſoul be reclaimed, or itſelf be, one way or other, bribed or debauched. But theſe neglects of the mind being ſpiritual, without very diligent attendance, they are ſeldom taken notice of. Our minds are often in the ſcriptures called our ſpirits: "Whom I ſerve in my ſpirit;" Rom. 1. 9. and are diſtinguiſhed from the ſoul, which principally intends the affections, in that diſtribution,—ſanctify you wholly, "your whole ſpirit and ſoul," 1 Theſſ. v. 23. that is, your mind and affections. It is true, where the term ſpirit is uſed to expreſs ſpiritual gifts, it is, as unto thoſe gifts, oppoſed to underſtandings; which is taken for the firſt act of the mind, in a rational perception of things: 1 Cor. xiv. 15. but as that word is applied unto any faculty of our ſouls, it is the mind that it expreſſeth. This then being our ſpirit, the actings of it are ſecret and hidden, and not to be diſcovered without ſpiritual wiſdom and diligence. Let us not ſuppoſe then, that we have dwelt too long on this conſideration, which is of ſo great importance to us, and yet ſo hidden, and which we are apt to be very inſenſible of; and yet our carefulneſs in this matter is one of the beſt evidences that we have of our ſincerity. Let us not then be like a man that is ſenſible, and complains of a cut finger, but not of a decay of ſpirits tending unto death. There remains therefore, as to this

head of our diſcourſe, the conſideration of the charge of the mind in reference unto particular duties and ſins. And in the conſideration of it, we ſhall do theſe two things;

Firſt, Shew what is required in the mind of a believer, in reference unto particular duties,

Secondly, Declare the way of the working of the deceit of ſin to draw it off from its attendance thereunto. The like alſo ſhall be done with reſpect unto particular ſins, and their avoidance.

Firſt, For the right performance of any duty. It is not enough that the thing required be itſelf performed, but that it be univerſally ſquared and fitted unto the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind, namely, to attend unto the rule of duties and to take care that all the concernments of them be ordered thereby. Our progreſs in obedience, is our edification, or building. Now it is but a very little furtherance unto a building, that a man bring wood and ſtones, and heap them up together, without order. They muſt be hewed and ſquared, and fitted by line and rule, if we intend to build. Nor is it unto any advantage unto our edification in faith and obedience, that we multiply duties, if we heap them upon one another, if we order and diſpoſe them not according to rule. And therefore doth God expreſly reject a multitude of duties, when not univerſally ſuited unto the rule: "To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices?" Iſa. i. 11. "they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them," ver. 14. And therefore all acceptable obedience is called, a proceeding according unto rule: Gal. vi. 16. it is a canonical, or regular obedience. As letters in the alphabet heaped together ſignify nothing, unleſs they are diſpoſed into their proper order; no more do our duties without this diſpoſal. That they be

ſo, is the great duty of the mind, and which, with all diligence, it is to attend unto: "Walk circumſpectly," Epheſ. v. 15. exactly, accurately, that is, diligently in all things; take heed to the rule of what you do. We walk in duties, but we walk circumſpectly in this attention of the mind.

Secondly, There are ſome ſpecial things which the rule directs unto, that the mind is to attend in every duty; as,

Firſt, That as to the matter of it, it be full and complete. Under the law, no beaſt was allowed to be a ſacrifice that had any member wanting, any defect of parts. Such were rejected, as well as thoſe that were lame or blind. Duties muſt be complete, as to the parts, the matter of them. There may be ſuch a part of the price kept back, as may make the tendering of all the reſidue unacceptable. Saul, ſparing Agag and the fatteſt of the cattle, rendered the deſtroying of all the reſt uſeleſs. Thus, when men will give alms, or perform other ſervices, but not unto the proportion that the rule requireth, and which the mind, by diligent attention unto it, might diſcover, the whole duty is vitiated.

Secondly, As to the principle of it, namely, that it be done in faith, and therein, by an actual derivation of ſtrength from Chriſt, without whom we "can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is not enough that the perſon be a believer, though that be neceſſary unto every good work, Epheſ. ii. 10. but alſo, that faith be peculiarly active in every duty that we do; for our whole obedience is the "obedience of faith;" Rom. i. 5. that is, which the doctrine of faith requireth, and which the grace of faith beareth or bringeth forth. So Chriſt is expreſly ſaid to be "our life;" Col. iii. 4. our ſpiritual life, that is, the ſpring, author,

and cauſe of it. Now as in life natural, no vital act can be performed, but by the actual operation of the principle of life itſelf; ſo, in life ſpiritual, no ſpiritually vital act, that is, no duty acceptable to God, can be performed, but by the actual working of Chriſt, who is our life. And this is no other way derived unto us, but by faith. Whence ſaith the apoſtle, "Chriſt liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the fleſh, is by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. Not only was Chriſt his life, a living principle unto him, but he led a life; that is, diſcharged vital actions, in all duties of holineſs and obedience, by the faith of the ſon of God, or in him; deriving ſupplies of grace and ſtrength from him thereby. This therefore ought a believer diligently to attend unto, namely, that every thing he doth to God, be done in the ſtrength of Chriſt; which wherein it conſiſteth, ought diligently to be inquired into by all who intend to walk with God.

Thirdly, In this reſpect unto rule, the manner of the performance of every duty is to be regarded. Now there are two things in the manner of the performance of any duty which a believer, who is entruſted with ſpiritual light, ought to attend unto.

Firſt, That it be done in the way, and by the means, that God hath preſcribed, with reſpect unto the outward manner of its performance. And this is eſpecially to be regarded in duties of the worſhip of God; the matter and outward manner whereof do both equally fall under his command. If this be not regarded, the whole duty is vitiated. I ſpeak not of them who ſuffer themſelves to be deluded by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, utterly to diſregard the rule of the word in ſuch things, and to worſhip God according to their own imagination, but of them principally,

who, although they in general profeſs to do nothing but what God requires, and as he requires it, yet do not diligently, attend to the rule, to make the authority of God to be the ſole cauſe and reaſon, both of what they do, and of the manner of the performance of it. And this is the reaſon that God ſo often calls on his people to conſider diligently and wiſely, that they may do all according as he had commanded.

Secondly, The affections of the heart and mind in duties, belong to the performance of them in the inward manner. The preſcriptions and commands of God, for attendance hereunto, are innumerable, and the want hereof, renders every duty an abomination unto him. A ſacrifice without an heart, without ſalt, without fire, of what value is it? No more are duties without ſpiritual affections. And herein is the mind to keep the charge of God; to ſee that the heart, which he requires, be tendered to him. And we find alſo, that God requireth eſpecial affections to accompany ſpecial duties. "He that gives with chearfulneſs;" which, if they are not attended unto, the whole is loſt.

Thirdly, The mind is to attend unto the ends of duties, and therein, principally, the glory of God in Chriſt. Several other ends will ſin and ſelf impoſe upon our duties; eſpecially two it will preſs hard upon us with: Firſt, Satisfaction of our convictions and conſciences. Secondly, The praiſe of men. For ſelf-righteouſneſs and oſtentation, are the main ends of men that are fallen off from God in all moral duties whatſoever. In their ſins they endeavour for to ſatisfy their luſts; in their duties, their conviction and pride. Theſe the mind of a believer is diligently to watch againſt, and to keep up in all a ſingle eye to the glory of God, as that which an-

ſwers the great and general rule of all our obedience; "Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." Theſe and the like things, I ſay, which are commonly ſpoken unto, is the mind of a believer obliged to attend diligently and conſtantly unto, with reſpect unto all the particular duties of our walking before God. Here then lies no ſmall part of the deceit of ſin; namely, to draw the mind off from this watch, to bring an inadvertency upon it, that it ſhall not, in theſe things, keep the watch and charge of the Lord. And if it can do ſo, and thereby ſtrip our duties of all their excellencies, which lie in theſe concernments of them, that the mind is to attend unto, it will not much trouble itſelf, nor us, about the duties themſelves. And this it attempts ſeveral ways.

Firſt, By perſuading the mind to content itſelf with generals, and to take it off from attending unto things in particular inſtances. For example; It would perſuade the ſoul to reſt ſatisfied in a general aim of doing things to the glory of God, without conſidering how every particular duty may have that tendency. Thus Saul thought that he had fulfilled his whole duty, and done the will of God, and ſought his glory, in his war againſt Amalek, when, for want of attendance to every particular duty in that ſervice, he had diſhonoured God, and ruined himſelf and his poſterity. And men may perſuade themſelves, that they have a general deſign for the glory of God, when they have no active principle in particular duties tending at all that way. But if, inſtead of fixing the mind by faith on the peculiar advancing the glory of God in a duty, the ſoul contents itſelf with a general notion of doing ſo, the mind is already diverted and drawn off from its charge, by the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

If a man be travelling in a journey, it is not only required of him, that he bend his courſe that way; and ſo go on; but, if he attend not unto every turning, and other occurrences in his way, he may wander, and never come to his journey's end. And if we ſuppoſe that, in general, we aim at the glory of God, as we all profeſs to do, yet if we attend not unto it diſtinctly, upon every duty that occurs in our way, we ſhall never attain the end aimed at. And he who ſatisfies himſelf with this general purpoſe, without acting it in every ſpecial duty, will not long retain that purpoſe neither. It doth the ſame work upon the mind, in reference unto the principle of our duty, as it doth unto the end. Their principle is, that they be done in faith, in the ſtrength of Chriſt; but if men content themſelves that they are believers, that they have faith, and do not labour in every particular duty to act faith, to lead their ſpiritual lives, in all the acts of them, "by the faith of the ſon of God," the mind is drawn off from its duty. It is particular actions wherein we expreſs and exerciſe our faith and obedience; and what we are in them, that we are, and no more.

Secondly, It draws off the mind from the duties before mentioned, by in inſinuating a ſecret contentment unto it, from the duty itſelf performed, as to the matter of it. This is a fair diſcharge of a natural conſcience. If the duty be performed, though as to the manner of its performance it come ſhort, almoſt in all things, of the rule, conſcience and conviction will be ſatisfied. As Saul, upon his expedition againſt Amalek, cries to Samuel, "Come in, thou bleſſed of the Lord, I have done the commandment of the Lord." He ſatisfied himſelf, though he had not attended, as he ought, to the whole will of God in that matter. And

thus was it with them, Isa. lviii. 3. "Wherefore have we fasted," say they, "and thou regardest it not?" They had pleased themselves in the performance of their duties, and expected that God also should be pleased with them. But he shews them at large wherein they had failed, and that so far as to render what they had done an abomination. And the like charge he expresseth against them, chap. xlviii. 1, 2. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw the mind unto, namely, to take up in the performance of the duty itself. Pray thou oughtest, and thou hast prayed; give alms thou oughtest, and thou hast given alms; quiet then thyself in what thou hast done, and go on to do the like. If it prevail herein, the mind is discharged from farther attendance and watching unto duty, which leaves the soul on the borders of many evils. For,

Thirdly, Hence customarinesss in all duties will quickly ensue, which is the height of sin's drawing off the mind from duty. For men's minds may be drawn from all duties in the midst of the most abundant performance of them. For in and under them, the mind may be subject unto an habitual diversion from its charge and watch unto the rule. What is done with such a frame, is not done to God, Amos v. 25. None of their sacrifices were to God, although they professed they were all so. But they attended not unto his worship in faith, and unto his glory, and he despised all their duties, Hos. x. 1. And this is the great reason why professors thrive so little under the performance of a multitude of duties. They attend not unto them in a due manner, their minds being drawn of from their circumspect watch, and so they have little or no communion with God in them, which is the end whereunto they are designed, and by which alone

they become uſeful and profitable unto themſelves. And in this manner are many duties of worſhip and obedience performed by a woful generation of hypocrites, formaliſts, and profane perſons, without either life or light in themſelves, or acceptation with God; their minds being wholly eſtranged from a due attendance unto what they do, by the power and deceitfulneſs of ſin.

Fourthly, As it is in reſpect of duties, ſo alſo it is in reſpect of ſins. There are ſundry things in and about every ſin that the mind of a believer, by virtue of its office and duty, is obliged to attend diligently unto, for the preſervation of the ſoul from it. Things there are which God hath appointed and ſanctified, to give effectual rebukes and checks to the whole working of the law of ſin, and ſuch as in the law of grace, under which we are, are exceedingly ſuited and fitted unto that purpoſe. And theſe the deceit of ſin endeavours, by all means, to draw off the mind from a due conſideration of, and attendance unto. Some few of them we ſhall a little reflect upon,

Firſt, The firſt and moſt general, is the ſovereignty of God, the great lawgiver, by whom it is forbidden. This Joſeph fixed on in his great temptation: "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God," Gen. xxxix. 9. There was in it a great evil, a great ingratitude againſt man, which he pleads alſo, and inſiſts upon, ver. 8, 9. but that which fixed his heart and reſolution againſt it, was the formality of it, that it was ſin againſt God, by whom it was ſeverely forbidden. So the apoſtle informs us, that in our dealing in any thing that is againſt the law, our reſpect is ſtill to be unto the lawgiver, and his ſovereignty: "If thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge; there is

one lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy," Jam. iv. 11, 12. Conſider this always, there is one lawgiver, holy, righteous, armed with ſovereign power and authority; he is able to ſave and deſtroy. Hence ſin is called a rebellion, a caſting off his yoke, a deſpiſing of him, and that in his ſovereignty, as the great lawgiver! and this ought the mind always practically to attend unto, in all the luſtings, actings, and ſuggeſtions of the law of ſin, eſpecially when advantaged by any ſuitable or vigorous temptation. It is God that hath forbidden this thing, the great lawgiver, under whoſe abſolute ſovereignty I am, in dependence on whom I live, and by whom I am to be diſpoſed of, as to my preſent and eternal condition. This Eve fixed on, at the beginning of her temptation; God hath ſaid, we muſt not eat of this tree, Gen. iii. 3. but ſhe kept not her ground, ſhe abode not by that conſideration, but ſuffered her mind to be diverted from it by the ſubtilty of ſatan, which was the entrance of her tranſgreſſion; and ſo it is unto us, in all our deviations from obedience.

Secondly, The deceit of ſin, of every ſin, the puniſhment appointed unto it in the law, is another thing that the mind ought actually to attend unto, in reference unto every particular evil. And the diverſions from this, that the minds of men have been doctrinally and practically attended withal, have been an inlet into all manner of abominations. Job profeſſeth another frame in himſelf: "Deſtruction from God was a terror unto me, and by reaſon of his highneſs I could not endure," Job xxxi. 23. Many evils he had mentioned in the foregoing verſes, and pleads his innocency from them, although they were ſuch as, upon account of greatneſs and power, he could have committed eaſily, without fear of danger

from men. Here he gives the reaſon that prevailed with him, ſo carefully to abſtain from them, "Deſtruction from God was a terror to me, and by reaſon of his highneſs, I could not endure." I conſidered, ſaith he, that God had appointed death and deſtruction for the puniſhment of ſin, and that ſuch was his greatneſs, highneſs, and power, that he could inflict it unto the uttermoſt, in ſuch a way, as no creature is able to abide or to avoid. So the apoſtle directs believers, always to conſider what a "fearful thing it is to fall into hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. and that becauſe he hath ſaid, "vengeance is mine, I will recompence," ver. 30. He is a ſin-avenging God, that will by no means acquit the guilty; as in the declaration of his gracious name, infinitely full of encouragement to poor ſinners in Chriſt, he adds that in the cloſe, that he "will by no means clear the guilty," Exod. xxxiv. 7. That he may keep upon the minds of them whom he pardoneth, a due ſenſe of the puniſhment that is due from his vindictive juſtice, unto every ſin. And ſo the apoſtle would have us mind, that even our "God is a conſuming fire," Heb. xii. 29. that is, that we ſhould conſider his holineſs and vindictive juſtice, appointing unto ſin a meet recompence of reward, And mens breaking through this conſideration, he reckons as the height of the aggravations of their ſins: "They knew that it is the judgment of God, that they which commit ſuch things were worthy of death, yet continued to do them," Rom. i. 32. What hope is there for ſuch perſons? There is, indeed, relief againſt this conſideration, for humbled believing ſouls in the blood of Chriſt; but this relief is not to take off the mind from it, as it is appointed of God to be a reſtraint from ſin. And both theſe conſidera-

tions, even the ſovereignty of God, and the puniſhment of ſin, are put together by our Saviour: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul: but rather fear him which is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell," Matt. x. 28.

Thirdly, The conſideration of all the love and kindneſs of God, againſt whom every ſin is committed, is another thing that the mind ought diligently to attend unto. And this is a prevailing conſideration, if rightly and graciouſly managed in the ſoul. This Moſes preſſeth on the people; "Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Is not he thy father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and eſtabliſhed thee? Deut. xxxii. 6. Is this a requital for eternal love, and all the fruits of it? for the love and care of a father, of a redeemer, that we have been made partakers of? And it is the ſame conſideration which the apoſtle manageth to this purpoſe; "Having therefore theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. The receiving of the promiſes ought to be effectual, as to ſtir us up unto all holineſs, ſo to work and effect an abſtinence from all ſin. And what promiſes are theſe? namely, that God will be "a father unto us, and will receive us," chap. vi. 17, 18. which compriſeth the whole of all the love of God towards us, here and to eternity. If there be any ſpiritual ingenuity in the ſoul, whilſt the mind is attentive to this conſideration, there can be no prevailing attempt made upon it by the power of ſin. Now there are two parts of this conſideration.

Firſt, that which is general in it, that which is common unto all believers. This is managed un-

to this purpoſe, " Behold, what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, becauſe it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the ſons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be; but we know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is. And every man that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 1—3. Conſider, ſaith he, the love of God, and the privileges that we enjoy by it: " Behold, what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God." Adoption is an eſpecial fruit of it, and how great a privilege is this? Such love it is, and ſuch are the fruits of it, that the world knoweth nothing of the bleſſed condition which we obtain and enjoy thereby: " The world knoweth us not," Nay, it is ſuch love, and ſo unſpeakably bleſſed and glorious are the effects of it, that we ourſelves are not able to comprehend them. What uſe then ought we to make of this contemplation of the excellent, unſpeakable love of God? Why ſaith he, " Every one that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf." Every man, who being made partaker of this love, and thereupon an hope of the full enjoyment of the fruits of it, of being made like to God in glory, purifieth himſelf, that is, in an abſtinence from all and every ſin, as in the following words is at large declared.

Secondly, It is to be conſidered as to ſuch peculiar mercies and fruits of love, as every one's ſoul hath been made partaker of. There is no believer, but, beſides the love and mercy which he hath in common with all his brethren, he hath alſo in the lot of his inheritance, ſome incloſures, ſome eſpecial mercies wherein he hath a ſingle property. He hath ſome joy which no ſtranger inter-

meddleth with, Prov. xiv. 10. particular applications of covenant love and mercy to his ſoul. Now theſe are all proviſions laid in by God, that they may be borne in mind againſt an hour of temptation, that the conſideration of them may preſerve the ſoul from the attempts of ſin. Their neglect is an high aggravation of our provocations. It is charged as the great evil of Solomon, that he had ſinned againſt ſpecial mercies, eſpecial intimations of love; he ſinned after God "had appeared to him twice," 1 Kings xi. 9. God required that he ſhould have borne in mind that eſpecial favour, and have made it an argument againſt ſin: but he neglected it, and is burdened with this ſore rebuke. And indeed all eſpecial mercies, all eſpecial tokens and pledges of love, are utterly loſt and miſpent upon us, if they are not improved unto this end. This, then, is another thing, that it is the duty of the mind greatly to attend unto, and to oppoſe effectually, unto every attempt that is made on the ſoul by the law of ſin.

Thirdly, The conſiderations that ariſe from the blood and mediation of Chriſt, are of the ſame importance. So the apoſtle declares; "For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them, and roſe again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. There is a conſtraining efficacy in this conſideration; it is great, forcible, effectual, if duly attended unto. But I muſt not here in particular inſiſt on theſe things. Nor,

Fourthly, Shall I ſpeak of the inhabitation of the Spirit, the greateſt privilege that we are made partakers of in this world. The due conſidera-

tion how he is grieved by ſin, how his dwelling-place is defiled thereby, how his comforts are forfeited, loſt, deſpiſed by it, might alſo be inſiſted on. But the inſtances paſſed through are ſufficient for our purpoſe. Now herein lies the duty of the mind, in reference unto particular ſins and temptations. It is diligently and carefully to attend unto theſe things, to dwell conſtantly upon the conſideration of them, to have them in a continual readineſs to oppoſe unto all the luſtings, actings, warrings, attempts, and rage of ſin.

In reference hereunto doth ſin, in an eſpecial manner, put forth and act its deceit. It labours by all means to draw off the mind from its due attendance unto theſe things; to deprive the ſoul of this great preſervative and antidote againſt its poiſon. It endeavours to cauſe the ſoul to ſatisfy itſelf with general undigeſted notions about ſin, that it may have nothing in particular to betake itſelf unto in its own defence, againſt its attempts and temptations. And the ways whereby it doth this, may be alſo briefly conſidered.

Firſt, It is from the deceit of ſin that the mind is ſpiritually ſlothful, whereby it becomes negligent unto this duty. The principal diſcharge of its truſt, in this matter, is expreſſed by watching, which is the great caution that the Lord Jeſus gave unto his diſciples, in reference to all their dangers from ſin and ſatan, "I ſay unto all watch," Mark xiv. 37. That is, uſe your utmoſt diligence and circumſpection, that you be not ſurpriſed and entangled with temptations. It is called alſo conſideration; "Conſider your ways:" "Conſider your latter end;" the want whereof God complains of in his people, Deut. xxxii. 29. Now that which is contrary to theſe indiſpenſible conditions of our preſervation, is ſpiritual ſloth-

fulneſs, as the apoſtle declares, "And we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence, to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end, that you be not ſlothful," Heb. vi. 11, 12. If we ſhew not diligence, we are ſlothful, and in danger of coming ſhort to inherit the promiſes; ſee what Peter ſays: "And beſides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, &c. For if theſe things be in you and abound, they make you that you ſhall neither be barren, nor unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus. But he that lacketh theſe things is blind, and cannot ſee afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old ſins; wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election ſure; for if ye do theſe things, you ſhall never fall; for ſo entrance ſhall be adminiſtered unto you abundantly, into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt," 2 Pet. i. 5, 9, 10. All this the mind is turned from, if once, by the deceit of ſin, it be made ſlothful. Now this ſloth conſiſts in three things.

First, Inadvertency; it doth not ſet itſelf to conſider and attend unto its ſpecial concernments. The apoſtle, perſuading the Hebrews with all earneſtneſs to attend diligently, to conſider carefully, that they may not be hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, gives this reaſon of their danger, that they were "dull of hearing," Heb. v. 11. That is, that they were ſlothful and did not attend unto the things of their duty. A ſecret regardleſſneſs is apt to creep upon the ſoul, and it doth not ſet itſelf to a diligent marking how things go with it, and what is continually incumbent on it.

Secondly, An unwillingneſs to be ſtirred up unto it's duty. "The ſlothful man hideth his hand

in his boſom, and will not ſo much as bring it to his mouth again," Prov. xix. 24. There is an unwillingneſs in ſloth to take any notice of warnings, calls, excitations, or ſtirrings up by the word, Spirit, judgments, any thing that God maketh uſe of, to call the mind unto a due conſideration of the condition of the ſoul. And this is a perfect evidence that the mind is made ſlothful by the deceit of ſin, when eſpecial calls, and warnings, whether in a ſuitable word, or a preſſing judgment, cannot prevail with it to pull its hand out of its boſom; that is, to ſet about the ſpecial duties that it is called unto.

Thirdly, Weak and ineffectual attempts to recover itſelf unto its duty. "As the door turneth itſelf upon its hinges, ſo doth the ſlothful man upon his bed," Prov. xxvi. 13. In the turning of a door upon its hinges, there is ſome motion, but no progreſs. It removes up and down, but is ſtill in the place and poſture that it was. So is it with the ſpiritually ſlothful man on his bed, or in his ſecurity. He makes ſome motions, or faint endeavours, towards a diſcharge of his duty, but goes not on. There, where he was one day, there he is the next; yea, there, where he was one year, he is the next. His endeavours are faint, cold, and evanid; he gets no ground by them, but is always beginning, and never finiſhing, his work.

Firſt, Heartleſſneſs upon the apprehenſions of difficulties and diſcouragements. "The ſlothful man ſaith, There is a lion in the way, I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets," Prov. xxii. 13. Every difficulty deters him from duty. He thinks it impoſſible for him to attain to that accuracy, exactneſs, and perfection which he is, in this matter to preſs after; and, therefore, contents himſelf in his old coldneſs and negligence, rather than to run

the hazard of an univerſal circumſpection. Now if the deceit of ſin hath once drawn away the mind into this frame, it lays it open to every temptation and incurſion of ſin. The Spouſe in the Canticles, ſeems to have been overtaken with this diſtemper; Prov. v. 1—3. and this puts her on various excuſes, why ſhe cannot attend unto the call of Chriſt, and apply herſelf unto her duty in walking with him.

Secondly, It draws away the mind from its watch and duty, in reference unto ſin, by ſurpriſals. It falls in conjunction with ſome urgent temptation, and ſurpriſeth the mind into thoughts, quite of another nature than thoſe which it ought to inſiſt upon, in its own defence. So it ſeems to have been with Peter; his carnal fear, cloſing with the temptation wherein ſatan ſought to winnow him, filled his mind with ſo many thoughts about his own imminent danger, that he could not take into conſideration the love and warning, of Chriſt, nor the evil whereunto his temptation led him, nor any thing that he ought to have inſiſted on for his preſervation. And, therefore, upon a review of his folly, in neglecting thoſe thoughts of God, and the love of Chriſt, which, through the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, might have kept him from his ſcandalous fall, he "wept bitterly." And this, indeed, is the common way to the working of the deceit of ſin, as unto particular evils. It lays hold on the mind ſuddenly, with thoughtfulneſs about the preſent ſin, poſſeſſeth it, taketh it up, ſo that either it recovers not itſelf at all to the conſiderations mentioned, or, if any thoughts of them be ſuggeſted, the mind is ſo prepoſſeſſed and filled, that they take no impreſſion on the ſoul, or make no abode in it. Thus, doubtleſs was David ſurpriſed in the entrance of his great ſin. Sin and temptation did ſo poſſeſs

and fill his mind, with the preſent object of his luſt, that he utterly forgot, as it were, thoſe conſiderations which he had formerly made uſe of, when he ſo diligently kept himſelf from his iniquity. Here, therefore, lies the great wiſdom of the ſoul, in rejecting the very firſt motions of ſin; becauſe, by parleys with them, the mind may be drawn off from attending unto its preſervatives, and ſo the whole ruſh into evil.

Thirdly, It draws away the mind by frequency and long continuance of its ſolicitations, making as it were at laſt a conqueſt of it, And this happens not without an open neglect of the ſoul, in want of ſtirring up itſelf to give an effectual rebuke, in the ſtrength, and by the grace, of Chriſt, unto ſin, which would have prevented its prevalency. But of this, more ſhall be ſpoken afterwards. And thus is the firſt way whereby the law of ſin acts its deceit againſt the ſoul. It draws off the mind from attendance unto its charge and office, both in reſpect of duty and ſin. And ſo far as this is done, the perſon is ſaid to be drawn away, or drawn off. He is tempted; every man is tempted when he is thus drawn away by his own luſt, or the deceit of ſin, dwelling in him. And the whole effect of this working of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, may be reduced unto theſe three heads.

Firſt, The remiſſion of an univerſally watchful frame of ſpirit unto every duty, and againſt all, even the moſt hidden and ſecret actings of ſin.

Secondly, The omiſſion of peculiar attending unto ſuch duties as have an eſpecial reſpect unto the weakening and ruin of the whole law of ſin, and the obviating of its deceitfulneſs.

Thirdly, Spiritual ſloth, as to a diligent regard unto all the eſpecial concernments of du-

ties and ſins. When theſe three things, with their branches mentioned, leſs or more, are brought about, in, or upon the ſoul, or ſo far as they are ſo, ſo far a man is drawn off by his own luſt, or the deceit of ſin.

There is no need of adding here any directions for the prevention of this evil, they having ſufficiently been laid down, in our paſſage through the conſideration, both of the duty of the mind, and of the deceit of ſin.

CHAP. XI.

The working of ſin by deceit to entangle the affections. The ways whereby it is done. Means of their prevention.

THE ſecond thing in the words of the apoſtle, aſcribed unto the deceitful working of ſin, is, enticing. A man is drawn away and enticed. And this ſeems particularly to reſpect the affections, as drawing away doth the mind. The mind is drawn away from duty, and the affections are enticed unto ſin. From the prevalency hereof, a man is ſaid to be enticed, or entangled, as with a bait; ſo the word imports. For there is an alluſion in it, unto the bait wherewith a fiſh is taken on the hook, which holds him to his deſtruction. And concerning this effect of the deceit of ſin, we ſhall briefly ſhew two things:

Firſt, What it is to be enticed, or to be entangled, with the bait of ſin; to have the affections tainted with an inclination thereunto, and when they are ſo.

Secondly, What courſe ſin takes, and what way it proceedeth in, thus to entice, enſnare, or entangle the ſoul.

Our firſt inquiry is, What it is to be enticed, or entangled, with the bait of ſin: And here,

Firſt, The affections are certainly entangled, when they ſtir up frequent imaginations about the propoſed object, which this deceit of ſin leadeth and enticeth towards. When ſin prevails, and the affections are gone fully after it, it fills the imagination with it, poſſeſſing it with images, likeneſſes, appearances of it continually. Such perſons deviſe iniquity, and work evil on their beds; which they alſo practiſe, when they are able when it is "in the power of their hand," Mic. ii. 1. As in particular, Peter tells us, that they "have eyes full of an adultereſs, and they cannot ceaſe from ſin," 2 Pet. ii. 14. That is, their imaginations are poſſeſſed with a continual repreſentation of the object of their luſts. And it is ſo, in part, where the affections are, in part, entangled with ſin, and begin to turn aſide unto it. John tells us, that the things that are in the world are, "the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. The luſt of the eyes is that which, by them, is conveyed unto the ſoul. Now it is not the bodily ſenſe of ſeeing, but the fixing of the imagination, from that ſenſe, on ſuch things that is intended. And this is called the eyes, becauſe thereby things are conſtantly repreſented unto the mind and ſoul, as outward objects are unto the inward ſenſe, by the eyes. And, oftentimes, the outward ſight of the eyes is the occaſion of theſe imaginations. So Achan declares how ſin prevailed with him: "firſt he ſaw the wedge of gold, and Babyloniſh garment, and then he coveted them," Joſh. vii. 21. He rolled them, the pleaſures, the profit of them, in his imagina-

tion, and then fixed his heart upon the obtaining of them. Now the heart may have a ſettled, fixed deteſtation of ſin; but yet, if a man find that the imagination of the mind is frequently ſolicited by it, and exerciſed about it, ſuch an one may know, that his affections are ſecretly enticed and entangled.

Secondly, This entanglement is heightened, when the imagination can prevail with the mind to lodge vain thoughts in it, with ſecret delight and complacency. This is termed by caſuiſts, *Cogitatio moroſa cum delectatione*, an abiding thought with delight, which, towards forbidden objects, is in all caſes actually ſinful. And yet, this may be, when the conſent of the will unto ſin is not obtained; when the ſoul would not, for the world, do the thing which yet thoughts begin to lodge in the mind about. This lodging of vain thoughts in the heart, the prophet complains of, as a thing greatly ſinful, and to be abhorred, Jer. iv. 14. All theſe thoughts are meſſengers, that carry ſin to and fro, between the imagination and the affections, and ſtill increaſe it; enflaming the imagination, and more and more entangling the affections. Achan thinks upon the golden wedge, this makes him like it, and love it; by loving of it, his thoughts are infected, and return to the imagination of its worth, and goodly ſhew, and ſo, by little and little, the ſoul is enflamed unto ſin. And here, if the will parts with its ſovereignty, ſin is actually conceived.

Thirdly, Inclinations, or readineſs to attend unto extenuations of ſin, or the reliefs that are tendered againſt ſin, when committed, manifeſt the affections to be entangled with it. We have ſhewn, and ſhall yet father evidence, that it is a great part of the deceit of ſin, to tender leſſening

and extenuating thoughts of ſin unto the mind. Is it not a little one? or, there is mercy provided; or, it ſhall be, in due time, relinquiſhed and given over; is its language in a deceived heart. Now, when there is a readineſs in the ſoul to hearken and give entertainment unto ſuch ſecret inſinuations, ariſing from this deceit, in reference unto any ſin, or unapproved courſe, it is an evidence that the affections are enticed. When the ſoul is willing, as it were, to be tempted, to be courted by ſin, to hearken to its dalliances and ſolicitations, it hath loſt of its conjugal affections unto Chriſt, and is entangled. This is "looking on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright:" Prov. xxiii. 21. a pleaſing contemplation on the invitations of ſin, whoſe end the wiſe man gives us ver. 32. When the deceit of ſin hath prevailed thus far on any perſon, then he is enticed or entangled; the will is not yet come to the actual conception of this or that ſin by its conſent, but the whole ſoul is in a near inclination thereunto. And many other inſtances I could give as tokens and evidences of this entanglement. Theſe may ſuffice to manifeſt what we intend thereby.

Our next inquiry is, how, or by what means, the deceit of ſin proceeds, thus to entice and entangle the affections; and two or three of its baits are manifeſt herein.

Firſt, It makes uſe of its former prevalency upon the mind in drawing it off from its watch and circumſpection. Says the wiſe man, "Surely in vain is the net ſpread in the ſight of any bird?" Prov. i. 17. or, before the eyes of every thing that hath a wing, as in the original. If it hath eyes open to diſcern the ſnare, and a wing to carry it away; it will not be caught. And in vain

ſhould the deceit of ſin ſpread its ſnares and nets for the entanglement of the ſoul, whilſt the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it doth, and ſo ſtir up the wings of its will and affections, to carry it away and avoid it. But if the eyes be put out, or diverted, the wings are of very little uſe for eſcape. And therefore this is one of the ways which is uſed by them who take birds or fowls in their nets, they have falſe lights, or ſhews of things, to divert the ſight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the ſeaſon to caſt their nets upon them. So doth the deceit of ſin; it firſt draws off and diverts the mind, by falſe reaſonings and pretences, as hath been ſhewn, and then caſts its net upon the affections for their entanglement.

Secondly, Taking advantage of ſuch ſeaſons, it propoſeth ſin as deſirable, as exceeding ſatisfactory, to the corrupt part of our affections. It gilds over the object by a thouſand pretences, which it preſents unto corrupt luſtings. This is the laying of a bait, which the apoſtle, in this verſe, evidently alludes unto. A bait is ſomewhat deſirable and ſuitable, that is propoſed to the hungry creature for its ſatisfaction, and it is, by all artifices, rendered deſirable and ſuitable. Thus is ſin preſented, by the help of the imagination, unto the ſoul; that is, ſinful and inordinate objects which the affections cleave unto, are ſo preſented. The apoſtles tells us, that there are "pleaſures of ſin;" Heb. xi. 25. which, unleſs they are deſpiſed, as they were by Moſes, there is no eſcaping of ſin itſelf. Hence they that live in ſin, are ſaid to "live in pleaſure," Jam. v. 5. Now this pleaſure of ſin conſiſts in its ſuitableneſs to give ſatisfaction to the fleſh, to luſt, to corrupt affections. Hence is that caution, "Make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſt there-

of," Rom. xiii. 14. That is, do not ſuffer your minds, thoughts, or affections to fix upon ſinful objects, ſuited to give ſatisfaction to the luſts of the fleſh, to nouriſh and cheriſh them thereby. To which purpoſe he ſpeaks again, "Fulfil ye not the luſts of the fleſh," Gal. v. 16. Bring not in the pleaſures of ſin, to give them ſatisfaction. When men are under the power of ſin, they are ſaid to "fulfil the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind," Epheſ. ii. 3. Thus, therefore, the deceit of ſin endeavours to entangle affections, by propoſing unto them, through the aſſiſtance of the imagination, that ſuitableneſs which is in it, to the ſatisfaction of its corrupt luſts, now ſet at ſome liberty, by the inadvertency of the mind. It preſents its wine as ſparkling in the cup, the beauty of the adultreſs, the riches of the world, unto ſenſual and covetous perſons, and ſomewhat in the like kind, in ſome degree, to believers themſelves. When, therefore, I ſay, ſin would entangle the ſoul, it prevails with the imagination to ſolicit the heart, by repreſenting this falſe painted beauty, or pretended ſatisfactorineſs of ſin: and then if ſatan, with any peculiar temptation, fall in to its aſſiſtance, it oftentimes inflames all the affections, and puts the whole ſoul into diſorder.

Thirdly, It hides the danger that attends ſin, it covers it, as the hook is covered with the bait, or the net ſpread over the meat for the fowl to be taken. It is not, indeed, poſſible that ſin ſhould utterly deprive the ſoul of the knowledge of the danger of it. It cannot diſpoſſeſs it of its notion or perſuaſion, that "the wages of ſin is death;" and that it is the judgment of God, that they that commit ſin are "worthy of death." But this it will do, it will ſo take up and poſſeſs the mind and affections, with the baits and deſirableneſs of ſin, that it ſhall divert them from an actual and

practical contemplation of the danger of it. What ſatan did, in and by his firſt temptation, that ſin doth ever ſince. At firſt, Eve guards herſelf with calling to mind the danger of ſin; If we eat, or touch it, we ſhall die, Gen. iii. 3. But, ſo ſoon as ſatan had filled her mind with the beauty and uſefulneſs of the fruit, to make one wiſe, how quickly did ſhe lay aſide her practical, prevalent conſideration of the danger of eating it, the curſe due unto it; or elſe relieves herſelf with a vain hope and pretence that it ſhould not be, becauſe the ſerpent told her ſo. So was David beguiled in his great tranſgreſſion by the deceit of ſin; his luſt being pleaſed and ſatisfied, the conſideration of the guilt and danger of his tranſgreſſion was taken away: and therefore he is ſaid to have "deſpiſed the Lord," 2 Sam. xii. 9. in that he conſidered not the evil that was in his heart, and the danger that attended it in the threatening or commination of the law. Now ſin, when it preſſeth upon the ſoul to this purpoſe, will uſe a thouſand wiles to hide from it the terror of the Lord, the end of tranſgreſſions, and eſpecially of that peculiar folly which it ſolicits the mind unto. Hopes of pardon ſhall be uſed to hide it, and future repentance ſhall hide it, and preſent importunity of luſt ſhall hide it, occaſions and importunities ſhall hide it, ſurpriſals ſhall hide it, extenuation of ſin ſhall hide it, balancing of duties againſt it ſhall hide it, fixing the imagination on preſent objects ſhall hide it, deſperate reſolutions to venture the uttermoſt for the enjoyment of luſt, in its pleaſures and profits, ſhall hide it. A thouſand wiles it hath which cannot be recounted.

Fourthly, Having prevailed thus far, gilding over the pleaſures of ſin, hiding its end and demerit, it proceeds to raiſe perverſe reaſonings in the mind, to fix it upon the ſin propoſed, that it

may be conceived and brought forth, the affections being already prevailed upon; of which we ſhall ſpeak under the next head, of its progreſs.

Here we may ſtay a little, as formerly, to give ſome few directions, for the obviating of this woful work of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be diſpoſed to the conception of ſin, would we be turned out of the road and way which goes down to death? Let us take heed of our affections, which are of ſo great concernment in the whole courſe of our obedience, that they are commonly, in the ſcripture, called by the name of the heart, as the principal things which God requires, in our walking before him. And this is not ſlightly to be attended unto. The wiſe man ſaith, "Keep thy heart with all diligence;" Prov. iv. 23. or, as in the original, above or before all keepings; before every watch, keep thy heart. You have many keepings that you watch unto; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your eſtates, to keep your reputations, to keep up your families; but, ſaith he, above all theſe keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with ſin; there is no ſafety without it. Save all other things and loſe the heart, and all is loſt, loſt unto all eternity. You will ſay then, what ſhall we do, or how ſhall we obſerve this duty?

Firſt, Keep your affections, as to their object in general. This advice the apoſtle gives in this very caſe, Coloſſ. iii. His advice, in the beginning of that chapter, is to direct us unto the mortification of ſin, which he expreſsly engageth in, ver 5. "Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth." Prevent the working and deceit of ſin, which wars in your members. To prepare

us, to enable us hereunto, he gives us that great direction. ver. 2. "Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. Fix your affections upon heavenly things, this will enable you to mortify sin: fill them with the things that are above, let them be exercised with them, and so enjoy the chiefest place in them. They are above; blessed and suitable objects, meet for, and answering unto our affections; God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand;" grace and glory; the mysteries revealed in the gospel, the blessedness promised thereby. Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, it is our happiness when they are; what access could sin, with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its envenomed baits, have unto our souls? How should we loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, Get ye hence, as an abominable thing? For, what are the vain transitory pleasures of sin, in comparison of the exceeding recompense of reward which is proposed unto us? which argument the apostle presses, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

Secondly, As to the object of your affections in an especial manner, let it be the cross of Christ, which hath an exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," Gal. vi. 14. The cross of Christ the apostle gloried and rejoiced in; this his heart was set upon, and these were the effects of it; it crucified the world unto him, made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken, all of them out of the world, and the things that are in

the world, namely, the "luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life." Theſe are the things that are in the world; from theſe doth ſin take all its baits, whereby it enticeth and entangleth our ſouls. If the heart be filled with the croſs of Chriſt, it caſts death and undeſirableneſs upon them all; it leaves no ſeeming beauty, no appearing pleaſure, or comelineſs in them. Again, ſaith he, "It crucifieth me to the world;" makes my heart, my affections, my deſires, dead unto any of theſe things. It roots up corrupt luſts and affections, leaves no principle to go forth and make proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof. Labour therefore, to fill your hearts with the croſs of Chriſt. Conſider the ſorrows he underwent, the curſe he bore, the blood he ſhed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your ſouls, and the myſtery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileneſs, the demerit, and puniſhment of ſin, as repreſented in the croſs, the blood, the death of Chriſt. Is Chriſt crucified for ſin, and ſhall not our hearts be crucified with him unto ſin? Shall we give entertainment unto that, or hearken unto its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which ſlew our dear Lord Jeſus? God forbid. Fill your affections with the croſs of Chriſt, that there may be no room for ſin. The world once put him out of the houſe into a ſtable, when he came to ſave us; let him now turn the world out of doors, when he is come to ſanctify us.

Thirdly, Look to the vigour of the affections towrads heavenly things. If they are not conſtantly attended, excited, directed, and warned, they are apt to decay, and ſin lies in wait to take every advantage againſt them. Many complaints we have in the ſcripture, of thoſe who loſt their firſt love, in ſuffering their affections to decay.

And this ſhould make us jealous over our own hearts, leſt we alſo ſhould be overtaken with the ſame backſliding frame. Wherefore be jealous over them, often ſtrictly examine them, and call them to account, ſupply unto them due conſiderations for their exciting and ſtirring up unto duty.

CHAP. XI.

The conception of ſin through its deceit. Wherein it conſiſteth, The conſent of the will unto ſin. The nature thereof. Ways and means whereby it is obtained. Other advantages made uſe of by the deceit of ſin. Ignorance, errors.

THE third ſucceſs of the deceit of ſin, in its progreſſive work, is the conception of actual ſin. When it hath drawn the mind off from its duty, and entangled the affections, it proceeds to conceive ſin, in order to the bringing of it forth. "Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin." Now the conception of ſin, in order unto its perpetration, can be nothing but the conſent of the will: for, as without the conſent of the will, ſin cannot be committed; ſo, where the will hath conſented unto it, there is nothing in the ſoul to hinder its actual accompliſhment. God doth, indeed, by various ways and means, fruſtrate the bringing forth of theſe adulterous conceptions, cauſing them to melt away in the womb, or, one way or other prove abortive, ſo that not the leaſt part of that ſin is committed which is willed or conceived; yet there is nothing

in the ſoul itſelf that remains to give check unto it, when once the will hath given its conſent. Oftentimes when a cloud is full of rain, and ready to fall, a wind comes and drives it away. And when the will is ready to bring forth its ſin, God diverts it, by one wind or other; but yet, the cloud was as full of rain as if it had fallen, and the ſoul as full of ſin as if it had been committed.

This conceiving of luſt, or ſin, then is its prevalency in obtaining the conſent of the will unto its ſolicitations. And, hereby, the ſoul is deflowered of its chaſtity towards God in Chriſt, as the apoſtle intimates, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. To clear up this matter, we muſt obſerve;

Firſt, That the will is the principle, the next ſeat and cauſe of obedience and diſobedience. Moral actions are unto us, or in us, ſo far good or evil as they partake of the conſent of the will. He ſpake truth of old, who ſaid, *Omne peccatum eſt adeo voluntarium, ut non ſit peccatum niſi ſit voluntarium.* "Every ſin is ſo voluntary, that if it be not voluntary it is not ſin." It is moſt true of actual ſins. The formality of their iniquity ariſeth from the acts of the will in them, and concerning them. I mean, as to the perſons that commit them; otherwiſe in itſelf, the formal reaſon of ſin is, its aberration from the law of God.

Secondly, There is a two-fold conſent of the will unto ſin.

Firſt, that which is full, abſolute, complete, and upon deliberation. A prevailing conſent, the convictions of the mind being conquered, and no principle of grace in the will to weaken it. With this conſent, the ſoul goes into ſin, as a ſhip before the wind, with all its ſails diſplayed, without any check or ſtop. It ruſheth into ſin, like the

horſe into the battle; men thereby, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, "giving themſelves over to ſin with greedineſs," Epheſ. iv. 19. Thus Ahab's will was in the murdering of Naboth, he did it upon deliberation, by contrivance, with a full conſent: the doing of it gave him ſuch ſatisfaction, as that it cured his malady, or the diſtemper of his mind. This is that conſent of the will, which is acted in in the finiſhing and completing of ſin in unregenerate perſons, and is not required to the ſingle bringing forth of ſin, whereof we ſpeak.

Secondly, There is a conſent of the will, which is attended with a ſecret renitency and volition of the contrary. Thus Peter's will was in the denying of his maſter. His will was in it, or he had not done it; it was a voluntary action, that which he choſe to do at that ſeaſon. Sin had not been brought forth, if it had not been thus conceived. But yet at this very time, there was reſident in his will, a contrary principle of love to Chriſt, yea, and faith in him, which utterly failed not. The efficacy of it was intercepted, and its operations ſuſpended actually, through the violent urging of the temptation that he was under; but yet it was in his will, and weakened his conſent unto ſin, though it conſented: It was not done with ſelf-pleaſing, which ſuch full acts of the will do produce.

Thirdly, Although there may be a predominant conſent in the will, which may ſuffice for the conception of particular ſins; yet there cannot be an abſolute, total, full conſent of the will of a believer unto any ſin: for,

Firſt, There is, in his will, a principle fixed on good, on all good. "He would do good," Rom. vii. 21. The principle of grace in the will, inclines him to all good. And this, in general, is prevalent againſt the principle of ſin, ſo

that the will is denominated from thence. Grace hath the rule and dominion, and not ſin, in the will of every believer. Now that conſent unto ſin in the will, which is contrary to the inclination, and generally a prevailing principle in the ſame will, is not, cannot be, total, abſolute, and complete.

Secondly, There is not only a general, ruling, prevailing principle in the will againſt ſin, but there is alſo a ſecret reluctancy in it unto its own act, in conſenting unto ſin. It is true, the ſoul is not ſenſible, ſometimes, of this reluctancy, becauſe the preſent conſent carries away the prevailing act of the will, and takes away the ſenſe of the luſtings of the ſpirit, or reluctancy of the principle of grace in the will. But the general rule holdeth in all things, at all times: "The ſpirit luſteth againſt the fleſh:" Gal. v. 17. it doth ſo actually, though not always to the ſame degree, nor with the ſame ſucceſs. And the prevalency of the contrary principle, in this or that particular act, doth not diſprove it. It is ſo on the other ſide, there is no acting of grace in the will, but ſin luſts againſt it; although that luſting be not made ſenſible in the ſoul, becauſe of the prevalency of the contrary acting of grace, yet it is enough to keep thoſe actings from perfection in their kind. So is it in this renitency of grace, againſt the acting of ſin in the ſoul; though it be not ſenſible in its operations, yet it is enough to keep that act from being full and complete. And much of ſpiritual wiſdom lies in diſcerning aright between the ſpiritual renitency of the principle of grace in the will againſt ſin, and the rebukes that are given the ſoul by conſcience upon conviction for ſin.

Thirdly, Obſerve, that reiterated, repeated acts of the conſent of the will unto ſin, may be-

get a diſpoſition and inclinableneſs in it unto the like acts, that may bring the will unto a proneneſs and readineſs to conſent unto ſin, upon eaſy ſolicitations, which is a condition dangerous to the ſoul, and greatly to be watched againſt.

Fourthly, This conſent of the will, which we have thus deſcribed, may be conſidered two ways.

Firſt, As it is exerciſed about the circumſtances, cauſes, means, and inducements unto ſin. Secondly, As it reſpects this or that actual ſin. In the firſt ſenſe, there is a virtual conſent of the will unto ſin, in every inadvertency unto the prevention of it, in every neglect of duty that makes way for it, in every hearkening unto any temptation leading towards it. In a word, in all the diverſions of the mind from its duty, and entanglements of the affections by ſin, before mentioned. For where there is no act of the will formally, or virtually, there is no ſin. But this is not that which we now ſpeak of. But, in particular, the conſent of the will unto this or that actual ſin, ſo far as that either ſin is committed, or is prevented, by other ways and means not of our preſent conſideration. And herein conſiſts the conceiving of ſin.

Theſe things being ſuppoſed, that which, in the next place, we are to conſider, is the way that the deceit of ſin proceedeth in, to procure the conſent of the will; and ſo to conceive actual ſin in the ſoul. To this purpoſe obſerve,

Firſt, That the will is a rational appetite. Rational as guided by the mind; and an appetite as excited by the affections; and ſo, in its operation or actings, hath reſpect to both, is influenced by both.

Secondly, It chuſeth nothing, conſents to nothing, but *ſub-ratione boni*, as it hath an appear-

ance of good, ſome preſent good. It cannot conſent to any thing, under the notion, or apprehenſion, of its being evil, in any kind. Good is its natural and neceſſary object, and therefore, whatever is propoſed unto it for its conſent, muſt be propoſed under an appearance of being either good in itſelf, or good at preſent unto the ſoul, or good ſo circumſtantiate as it is; ſo that;

Thirdly, We may ſee hence the reaſon why the conception of ſin is here placed as a conſequent of the mind's being drawn away, and the affections being entangled. Both theſe have an influence into the conſent of the will, and the conception of this or that actual ſin thereby. Our way, therefore here, is made ſomewhat plain. We have ſeen, at large, how the mind is drawn away by the deceit of ſin, and how the affections are entangled; that which remains is but the proper effect of theſe things; for the diſcovery whereof we muſt inſtance in ſome of the ſpecial deceits, corrupt and fallacious reaſonings, beforementioned, and then ſhew their prevalency on the will, to a conſent unto ſin.

Firſt, The will is impoſed upon by that corrupt reaſoning, that grace is exalted in pardon; and that mercy is provided for ſinners. This firſt, as hath been ſhewn, deceives the mind, and that opens the way to the will's conſent, by removing a ſight of evil, which the will hath an averſation unto. And this, in carnal hearts, prevails ſo far, as to make them think that their liberty conſiſt in being "ſervants of corruption," 2 Pet. ii. 19. And the poiſon of it doth, oftentimes, taint and vitiate the minds of believers themſelves, whence we are ſo cautioned againſt it in Scripture. To what therefore hath been ſpoken, before, unto the uſe and abuſe of the doctrine of the grace of the goſpel, we ſhall

add ſome few other conſiderations, and fix upon one place of ſcripture that will give light unto it. There is a two-fold myſtery of grace; of walking with God, and of coming unto God. And the great deſign of ſin is, to change the doctrine and myſtery of grace in reference unto theſe things, and that by applying thoſe conſiderations unto the one which are proper unto the other, whereby each part is hindered, and the influence of the doctrine of grace into them, for their furtherance, defeated; "Theſe things write I unto you that ye ſin not; and if any man ſin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our ſin," 1 John ii. 1, 2. Here is the whole deſign and uſe of the goſpel briefly expreſſed: "Theſe things," ſaith he, "I write unto you;" what things were theſe? Thoſe mentioned, chap. i. ver. 2. "The life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us;" that is, the things concerning the perſon and mediation of Chriſt: and, ver. 7. that pardon, forgiveneſs and expiation from ſin, is to be attained by the blood of Chriſt. But to what end and purpoſe doth he write theſe things to them? What do they teach, what do they tend unto? An univerſal abſtinence from ſin; "I write unto you," ſaith he, "that you ſin not." This is the proper, only, genuine end of the doctrine of the goſpel. But to abſtain from all ſin, is not our condition in this world. "If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive ourſelves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8. What then ſhall be done in this caſe? In ſuppoſition of ſin, that we have ſinned, is there no relief provided for our ſouls and conſciences in the goſpel? Yes, ſaith he, "If any man ſin, we have

an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, and he is a propitiation for our ſins.' There is full relief in the propitiation and interceſſion of Chriſt for us. This is the order and method of the doctrine of the goſpel, and of the application of it to our own ſouls: firſt, to keep us from ſin; and then to relieve us againſt ſin. But here entereth the deceit of ſin, and puts this "new wine into old bottles," whereby the bottles are broken, and the wine periſheth, as to our benefit by it. It changeth this method and order of the application of goſpel-truths. It takes up the laſt firſt, and that excludes the uſe of the firſt utterly. If any man ſin, there is pardon provided, is all the goſpel that ſin would willingly ſuffer to abide on the minds of men. When we would come to God by believing, it would be preſſing the former part, of being free from ſin, when the goſpel propoſeth the latter principally, or the pardon of ſin for our encouragement. When we are come to God, and ſhould walk with him, it will have only the latter propoſed, that there is pardon of ſin; when the goſpel principally propoſeth the former, of keeping ourſelves from ſin. The grace of God bringing ſalvation, having appeared unto us to that end and purpoſe. Now the mind being entangled with this deceit, drawn off from its watch by it, diverted from the true ends of the goſpel, doth ſeveral ways impoſe upon the will, to obtain its conſent.

Firſt, by a ſudden ſurpriſal in caſe of temptation. Temptation is the repreſentation of a thing as a preſent good, a particular good which is a real evil, a general evil. Now when a temptation, armed with opportunity and provocation, befals the ſoul, the principle of grace in the will, riſeth up, with a rejection and deteſtation of it. But on a ſudden the mind, being deceived by ſin, breaks in upon

the will, with a corrupt falacious reaſoning from goſpel-grace and mercy, which firſt ſtaggers, then abates, the will's oppoſition, and then cauſeth it to caſt the ſcale, by its conſent on the ſide of temptation, preſenting evil as a preſent good; and ſin, in the ſight of God, is conceived, though it be never committed. Thus is the ſeed of God ſacrificed to Moloch, and the weapons of Chriſt abuſed to the ſervice of the devil.

Secondly, It doth it inſenſibly. It inſinuates the poiſon of this corrupt reaſoning by little and little, until it hath greatly prevailed. And as the whole effect of the doctrine of the goſpel in holineſs and obedience, conſiſts in the ſoul's being caſt into the frame and mould of it, Rom. vi. 17. ſo the whole of apoſtaſy from the goſpel, is principally the caſting of the ſoul into the mould of this falſe reaſoning, that ſin may be indulged unto, upon account of grace and pardon. Hereby is the ſoul gratified in ſloth and negligence, and taken off from its care, as to particular duties, and avoidance of particular ſins. It works the ſoul, inſenſibly, off from the myſtery of the law of grace, to look for ſalvation, as if we had never performed any duty, being, after we have done all, unprofitable ſervants, with a reſting on ſovereign mercy through the blood of Chriſt, and to attend unto duties with all diligence, as if we looked for no mercy; that is, with no leſs care, though with more liberty and freedom. This the deceitfulneſs of ſin endeavoureth, by all means, to work the ſoul from, and thereby debaucheth the will, when its conſent is required unto particular ſins.

Thirdly, The deceived mind impoſeth on the will to obtain its conſent unto ſin, by propoſing unto it, the advantages that may accrue and ariſe thereby, which is one medium whereby itſelf alſo is drawn away. It renders that which is abſo-

lutely evil, a preſent appearing good. So was it with Eve Gen. iii. laying aſide all conſiderations of the law, covenant, and threats of God; ſhe all at once reflects upon the advantages, pleaſures, and benefits which ſhe ſhould obtain by her ſin, and reckons them up to ſolicit the conſent of her will. "It is," ſaith ſhe, "good for food, pleaſant to the eyes, and to be deſired to make one wiſe." What ſhould ſhe do then but eat it; her will conſented, and ſhe did ſo accordingly. Pleas for obedience, are laid out of the way, and only the pleaſures of ſin are taken under conſideration. So ſaith Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. "Naboth's vineyard is near my houſe, and I may make it a garden of herbs," therefore I muſt have it. Theſe conſiderations a deceived mind impoſed on his will; until it made him obſtinate in the purſuit of his covetouſneſs, through perjury and murder, to the utter ruin of himſelf and his family. Thus is the guilt and tendency of ſin hid under the covert of advantages and pleaſures, and ſo is conceived or reſolved on in the ſoul.

Fourthly, As the mind being withdrawn, ſo the affections being enticed and entangled, do greatly further the conception of ſin in the ſoul by the conſent of the will, and they do it two ways.

Firſt, By ſome haſty impulſe and ſurpriſal; being themſelves ſtirred up, incited, and drawn forth by ſome violent provocation, or ſuitable temptation, they put the whole ſoul, as it were, into a combuſtion, and draw the will into a conſent unto what they are provoked unto, and entangled withal. So was the caſe of David in the matter of Nabal. A violent provocation, from the extreme unworthy carriage of that fooliſh churl, ſtirs him up to wrath and revenge: he reſolves upon it, to deſtroy a whole family, the in-

nocent with the guilty, 1 Sam. xxv. 13, 34, 35. Self-revenge, and murder, were, for the ſeaſon, conceived, reſolved, conſented unto, until God graciouſly took him off. His entangled, provoked affections, ſurpriſed his will to conſent to the conception of many bloody ſins. The caſe was the ſame with Aſa in his anger, when he ſmote the prophet; and with Peter in his fear, when he denied his maſter. Let that ſoul which would take heed of conceiving ſin, take heed of entangled affections; for ſin may be ſuddenly conceived, the prevalent conſent of the will may be ſuddenly obtained, which gives the ſoul a fixed guilt, though the ſin itſelf be never actually brought forth.

Secondly, Enticed affections procure the conſent of the will by frequent ſolicitations, whereby they get ground inſenſibly upon it, and enthrone themſelves. Take an inſtance in the ſons of Jacob, Gen. xxxvii. 4. They hate their brother, becauſe their father loved him. Their affections being enticed, many new occaſions fall out to entangle them farther, as his dreams and the like. This lay rankling in their hearts, and never ceaſed ſoliciting their wills, until they reſolved upon his death. The unlawfulneſs, the unnaturalneſs, of the action, the grief of their aged father, the guilt of their own ſouls, are all laid aſide; that hatred and envy that they had conceived againſt him, ceaſed not, until they had got the conſent of their wills to his ruin. This gradual progreſs of the prevalency of corrupt affections, to ſolicit the ſoul unto ſin, the wiſe man excellently deſcribes, Prov. xxiii. 31—35. And this is the common way of ſin's procedure in the deſtruction of ſouls, which ſeem to have ſome good engagements in the ways of God. When it hath entangled them with one temptation, and

brought the will to ſome liking of it, that preſently becomes another temptation, either to the neglect of ſome duty, or to the refuſal of more light: and, commonly, that whereby men fall off utterly from God, is not that wherewith they are firſt entangled. And this may briefly ſuffice for the third progreſſive act of the deceit of ſin. It obtains the will's conſent unto its conception; and, by this means are multitudes of ſins conceived in the heart, which very little leſs defile the ſoul, or cauſe it to contract very little leſs guilt, than if they were actually committed.

Unto what hath been ſpoken concerning the deceitfulneſs of indwelling ſin in general, which greatly evidenceth its power and efficacy, I ſhall add, as a cloſe of this diſcourſe, one or two particular ways of its deceitful actings, conſiſting in advantages that it maketh uſe of, (and means of relieving itſelf againſt that diſquiſition which is made after it, by the word and ſpirit) for its ruin. One head only, of each ſort, we ſhall here name.

Firſt, It makes great advantage of the darkneſs of the mind, to work out its deſign and intendments. The ſhades of a mind totally dark, that is, utterly devoid of ſaving grace, are the proper working place of ſin. Hence the effects of it are called, the "works of darkneſs," Epheſ. v. 11. Rom. xiii. 12. as ſpringing from thence. Sin works and brings forth by the help of it. The working of luſt under the covert of a dark mind, is, as it were, the upper region of hell; for it lies at the next door to it, for filth, horror, and confuſion. Now there is a partial darkneſs abiding ſtill in believers; they "know but in part," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though there be in them all a principle of ſaving light, the day-ſtar is riſen in their hearts; yet all the ſhades of darkneſs are

not utterly expelled out of them in this life. And there are two parts, as it were, or principal effects, of the remaining darkneſs that is in believers. Firſt, Ignorance, or a neſcience of the will of God, either *juris* or *facti*, of the rule and law in general, or of the reference of the particular fact, that lies before the mind, unto the law. Secondly, Error and miſtakes, poſitively taking that for truth which is falſehood, and that for light which is darkneſs. Now of both theſe doth the law of ſin make great advantage, for the exerting of its power in the ſoul.

Firſt, Is there a remaining ignorance of any thing of the will of God? ſin will be ſure to make uſe of it, and improve it to the uttermoſt. Though Abimelech were not a believer, yet he was a perſon that had a moral integrity with him in his ways and actions; he declares himſelf to have had this, in a ſolemn appeal to God, the ſearcher of all hearts, even in that wherein he miſcarried, Gen. xx. 5. But being ignorant that fornication was a ſin, or ſo great a ſin, as that it became not a morally honeſt man to defile himſelf with it, luſt hurries him into that intention of evil, in reference unto Sarah, as we have it there related. God complains that his people "periſhed for lack of knowledge," Hoſ. iv. 6. Being ignorant of the mind and will of God, they ruſhed into evil, at every command of the law of ſin. Be it as to any duty to be performed, or as to any ſin to be committed, if there be in it darkneſs or ignorance of the mind about them, ſin will not loſe its advantage. Many a man, being ignorant of the duty incumbent upon him, for the inſtruction of his family, caſting the whole weight of it upon the public teaching, is, by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, brought into an habitual ſloth and negligence of duty; ſo much ignorance of the will of

God and duty, ſo much advantage is given to the law of ſin. And hence we may ſee what is that true knowledge which with God is acceptable; how exactly doth many a poor ſoul, who is low as to notional knowledge, yet walk with God. It ſeems they know ſo much, as ſin hath not, on that account, much advantage againſt them; when others, high in their notions, give advantage to their luſts, even by their ignorance, though they know it not.

Secondly, Error is a worſe part or effect of the mind's darkneſs, and gives great advantage to the law of ſin. There is, indeed, ignorance in every error, but there is not error in all ignorance, and ſo they may be diſtinguiſhed. I ſhall need to exemplify this but with one conſideration, and that is, of men, who being zealous for ſome error, do ſeek to ſuppreſs and perſecute the truth. Indwelling ſin deſires no greater advantage. How will it, every day, every hour, pour forth wrath, revilings, hard ſpeeches; breathe revenge, murder, deſolation, under the name perhaps of zeal. On this account we may ſee poor creatures pleaſing themſelves every day, as if they vaunted in their excellency, when they are foaming out their own ſhame. Under their real darkneſs and pretended zeal, ſin ſits ſecurely, and fills pulpits, houſes, prayers, ſtreets, with as bitter fruits of envy, malice, wrath, hatred, evil ſurmiſes, falſe ſpeakings, as full as they can hold. The common iſſue with ſuch poor creatures, is, the holy, bleſſed, meek, ſpirit of God withdraws from them, and leaves them viſibly and openly to that evil, froward, wrathful, worldly ſpirit, which the law of ſin hath cheriſhed and heightened in them. Sin dwells not any where more ſecure than in ſuch a frame. Thus, I ſay, it lays hold in particular of advantages to practiſe upon, with its de-

ceitfulneſs, and therein alſo, to exert its power in the ſoul, whereof this ſingle inſtance of its improving the darkneſs of the mind unto its own ends, is a ſufficient evidence.

Thirdly, It uſeth means of relieving itſelf againſt the purſuit that is made after it in the heart by the word and ſpirit of grace. One alſo of its wiles, in the way of inſtance, I ſhall name in this kind, and that is, the alleviation of its own guilt. It pleads for itſelf, that it is not ſo bad, ſo filthy, ſo fatal, as is pretended; and this courſe of extenuation proceeds in two ways. Firſt, Abſolutely; many ſecret pleas it will have, that the evil which it tends unto, is not ſo pernicious as conſcience is perſuaded that it is, it may be ventured on without ruin. Theſe conſiderations it will ſtrongly urge, when it is at work in a way of ſurpriſal, when the ſoul hath no leiſure or or liberty to weigh its ſuggeſtions in the balance of the ſanctuary; and not ſeldom is the will impoſed on hereby, and advantages gotten to ſhift itſelf from under the ſword of the ſpirit. It is not ſuch but that it may be let alone, or ſuffered to die of itſelf, which probably within a while it may do; no need of that violence, which in mortification is to be offered; it is time enough to deal with a matter of no greater importance hereafter; with other pleas like thoſe before-mentioned. Secondly, Comparatively; and this is a large field for its deceit and ſubtilty to lurk in. Though it is an evil indeed to be relinquiſhed, and the ſoul is to be made watchful againſt it, yet it is not of that magnitude and degree, as we may ſee in the lives of others, even ſaints of God, much leſs ſuch as ſome ſaints of old have fallen into. By theſe and the like pretences, I ſay, it ſeeks to evade and keep its abode in the ſoul, when pur-

sued, to destruction. And how little a portion of its deceitfulness is it that we have declared!

CHAP. XIII.

Several ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived sin is obstructed.

BEFORE we proceed to the remaining evidence of the power and efficacy of the law of sin, we shall take occasion, from what hath been delivered, to divert unto one consideration that offers itself from that scripture, which was made the bottom and foundation of our discourse, of the general deceitfulness of sin; namely, James i. 14. The apostle tells us, that "lust conceiving brings forth sin;" seeming to intimate, that whatever sin is conceived, that also is brought forth. Now placing the conception of sin, as we have done, in the consent of the will unto it, and reckoning, as we ought, the bringing forth of sin to consist in its actual commission, we know that these do not necessarily follow one another. There is a world of sin conceived in the womb of the wills and hearts of men, that is never brought forth. Our present business then shall be to inquire. Whence comes that to pass. I answer then;

First, that this is not so, is no thanks to sin, nor the law of it. What it conceives, it would bring forth; and that it doth not, is, for the most part, but a small abatement of its guilt. A determinate will of actual sinning, is actual sin. There is nothing wanting on sin's part, that every conceived

ſin is not actually accompliſhed. The obſtacle and prevention lies on another hand.

Secondly, there are two things that are neceſſary in the creature that hath conceived ſin, for the bringing of it forth. Firſt, Power. Secondly, Continuance in the will of ſinning, until it be perpetrated and committed. Where theſe two are, actual ſin will unavoidably enſue. It is evident, therefore, that that which hinders conceived ſin from being brought forth, muſt affect either the power or the will of the ſinner. This muſt be from God. And he hath two ways of doing it. Firſt, By his providence, whereby he obſtructs the power of ſinning. Secondly, By his grace, whereby he diverts or changes the will of ſinning. I do not mention theſe ways of God's diſpenſations, thus diſtinctly, as though the one of them were always without the other; for there is much of grace in providential adminiſtrations, and much of the wiſdom of providence ſeen in the diſpenſations of grace. But I place them in this diſtinction, becauſe they appear moſt eminent therein. Providence, in outward acts, reſpecting the power of the creature; grace, common or ſpecial, in internal efficacy, reſpecting his will. And we ſhall begin with the firſt.

Firſt, when ſin is conceived, the Lord obſtructs its production by his providence, in taking away, or taking ſhort, that power, which is abſolutely neceſſary for its bringing forth, or accompliſhment. As,

1ſt. Life is the foundation of all power, the principle of operation. When that ceaſeth, all power ceaſeth with it. Even God himſelf, to evince the everlaſting ſtability of his own power, gives himſelf the title of the Living God. Now he frequently obviates the power of exerting ſin actually, by cutting ſhort, and taking away, the

lives of them that have conceived it. Thus he dealt with the army of Senacherib, when, according as he had purpoſed, ſo he threatened, that "the Lord ſhould not deliver Jeruſalem out of his hand," 2 Kings xviii. 35. God threatens to cut ſhort his power, that he ſhould not execute his intendment, chap. xix. 28. which he performs accordingly by taking away the lives of his ſoldiers, ver. 35. without whom it was impoſſible that his conceived ſin ſhould be brought forth. This providential diſpenſation in the obſtruction of conceived ſin, Moſes excellently ſets forth in the caſe of Pharaoh, "The enemy ſaid, I will purſue, I will overtake, I will divide the ſpoil, my luſts ſhall be ſatisfied upon them: I will draw my ſword, my hand ſhall deſtroy them. Thou didſt blow with thy wind, the ſea covered them, they ſank as lead in the mighty waters," Exod. xv. 9, 19. Sin's conception is fully expreſſed, and as full a prevention is annexed unto it. In like manner he dealt with the companies of fifties and their captains, who came to apprehend Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10, 11. fire came down from heaven and conſumed them, when they were ready to have taken him. And ſundry other inſtances of the like nature might be recorded. That which is of univerſal concernment, we have in that great providential alteration, which put a period to the lives of men. Men living hundreds of years, had a long ſeaſon to bring forth the ſins they had conceived; thereupon the earth was filled with violence, injuſtice, and rapine; and all "fleſh corrupted their ways," Gen. vi. 12, 19. To prevent the like inundation of ſin, God ſhortens the courſe of the pilgrimage of men in the earth, and reduces their lives to a much ſhorter meaſure. Beſides this general law, God daily thus cuts off perſons, who had conceived much miſchief and vi-

olence in their hearts, and prevents the execution of it. "Blood-thirſty and deceitful men do not live out half their days." They have yet much work to do, might they have but ſpace given them to execute the bloody and ſinful purpoſes of their minds. The Pſalmiſt tells us, "In the day that the breath of man goeth forth, his thoughts periſh," Pſal. cxlvi. 4. he had many contrivances about ſin, but now they are all cut off. So alſo the wiſe man, "Though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet ſurely I know that it ſhall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him; but it ſhall not be well with the wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his days, which are as a ſhadow, becauſe he feareth not before God," Eccleſ. viii. 12, 13. How long ſoever a wicked man lives, yet he dies judicially, and ſhall not abide to do the evil he had conceived.

But now, ſeeing we have granted that even believers themſelves may conceive ſin, through the power and deceitfulneſs of it; it may be inquired whether God ever thus obviates its production and accompliſhment in them, by cutting off, and taking away their lives, ſo as that they ſhall not be able to perform it: I anſwer,

Firſt, That God doth not judicially cut off, and take away the life of any of his, for this end and purpoſe, that he may thereby prevent the execution, or bringing forth of any particular ſin that he had conceived, and which, without that taking away, he would have perpetrated. For,

1ſt, This is directly contrary to the very declared end of the patience of God towards them, 2 Pet. iii. 9. This is the very end of the long-ſuffering of God towards believers, that before they depart hence, they may come to the ſenſe, acknowledgement, and repentance of every known

ſin. This is the conſtant and unchangeable rule of God's patience in the covenant of grace; which is ſo far from being, in them, an encouragement unto ſin, that it is a motive to univerſal watchfulneſs againſt it, of the ſame nature with all goſpel grace, and of mercy in the blood of Chriſt. Now this diſpenſation whereof we ſpeak, would lie in a direct contradiction unto it.

Secondly, This alſo flows from the former, that whereas conceived ſin contains the whole nature of it, as our Saviour at large declares, Matth. v. And to be cut off under the guilt of it, to prevent its farther progreſs, argues a continuance in the purpoſe of it without repentance; it cannot be but they muſt periſh for ever, who are ſo judicially cut off. But God deals not ſo with his, he caſts not off the people whom he did foreknow. And thence David prays for the patience of God before mentioned, that it might not be ſo with him, "O ſpare me that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence, and be no more," Pſal. xxxix. 13. But yet,

2dly, There are ſome caſes wherein God may, and doth, take away the lives of his own, to prevent the guilt that otherwiſe they would be involved in; as,

Firſt, in the coming of ſome great temptation and trial upon the world. God knowing that ſuch and ſuch of his would not be able to withſtand it, and hold out againſt it, but would diſhonour him, and defile themſelves, he may, and doubtleſs often doth, take them out of the world, to take them out of the way of it. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come," Iſa. lvii. 1. Not only the evil of puniſhment, but the evil of temptations and trials, which oftentimes prove much the worſe of the two. Thus a cap-

tain, in war, will call off a ſoldier from his watch, and guard, when he knows he is not able, through ſome infirmity, to bear the ſtreſs and force of the enemy that is coming upon him.

Secondly, In caſe of their engagement into any way not acceptable to him, through ignorance, or not knowing of his mind and will. This ſeems to have been the caſe with Joſiah. And doubtleſs the Lord doth oftentimes thus proceed with his. When any of his own are engaged in ways which pleaſe him not, through the darkneſs and ignorance of their minds, that they may not proceed to farther evil or miſchief, he calls them off from their ſtation and employment, and takes them to himſelf, where they ſhall err and miſtake no more. But in ordinary caſes God hath other ways, of diverting his own from ſin, than by killing of them, as we ſhall ſee afterwards.

Thirdly, God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived ſin, by taking away, and cutting ſhort the power of them that had conceived it; ſo that though their lives continue, they ſhall not have that power, without which it is impoſſible for them to execute what they had intended, or to bring forth what they had conceived. Hereof alſo we have ſundry inſtances. This was the caſe with the builders of Babel: whatever it were in particular that they aimed at, it was in purſuit of a deſign of apoſtacy from God. One thing requiſite to the accompliſhment of what they aimed at, was the oneneſs of their language; ſo God ſays, "they have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be reſtrained from them that they have imagined to do," Gen. xi. 6. In an ordinary way they will accompliſh their wicked deſign. What courſe doth God now take to obviate their conceived ſin? Doth he bring a flood upon them to deſtroy them, as

in the world ſome time before? Doth he ſend his angel to cut them off, like the army of Senacherib afterwards? Doth he by any means take away their lives? No, their lives are continued, but he confounds their language, ſo that they cannot go on with their work; he takes away that wherein their power conſiſted. In like manner he did proceed with the Sodomites. They were engaged in, and ſet upon the purſuit of their filthy luſts. God ſmites them with blindneſs, Gen. xix. 11. ſo that they could not find the door where they thought to have uſed violence for the compaſſing of their ends: their lives were continued, and their will of ſinning, but their power is cut ſhort and abridged. His dealing with Jeroboam was of the ſame nature. He ſtretched out his hand, to lay hold of the prophet, 1 Kings xiii, 4. and it withered and became uſeleſs. And this is an eminent way of the effectual actings of God's providence in the world, for the ſtopping of that inundation of ſin, which would overflow all the earth, were every womb of it opened. He cuts men ſhort of their moral power whereby they ſhould effect it. Many a wretch that hath conceived miſchief againſt the church of God, hath, by this means, been diveſted of his power, whereby he thought to accompliſh it. Some have their bodies ſmitten with diſeaſes, ſo that they can no more ſerve their luſts, nor accompany them in the perpetrating of folly. Some are deprived of the inſtruments whereby they would work. There hath been for many days, ſin and miſchief enough conceived to root out the generation of the righteous from the face of the earth, had men ſtrength and ability to their will, did not God cut off and ſhorten their power, and the days of their prevalency. "They ſearch out iniquity, they accompliſh a diligent ſearch, both

the inward thought of every one of them and the heart is deep," Pſal. lxiv. 6. All things are in a readineſs, the deſign is well laid, their counſels are deep and ſecret. What now ſhall hinder them from doing whatever they have imagined to do? "But God ſhall ſhoot at them with an arrow, ſuddenly ſhall they be wounded: So they ſhall make their own tongue to fall upon themſelves," ver. 7, 8. God meets with them, brings them down, that they ſhall not be able to accompliſh their deſign. And this way of God's preventing ſin ſeems to be, at leaſt ordinarily, peculiar to the men of the world: God deals thus with them every day, and leaves them to pine away in their ſins. They go all their days big with the iniquity they have conceived, and are greatly burdened that they cannot be delivered of it. The prophet tells us, "that they practiſe iniquity that they had conceived, becauſe it is in the power of their hand," Micah. ii. 1. If they have power for it, they will accompliſh it: "To their power they ſhed blood," Ezek. xxii. 6. This is the meaſure of their ſinning, even their power. They do many of them, no more evil, they commit no more ſin, than they can. Their whole reſtraint lies in being cut ſhort in power, in one kind or another. Their bodies will not ſerve them for their contrived uncleanneſſes, nor their hands for their revenge and rapine, nor their inſtruments for perſecution; but they go, burthened with conceived ſin, and are diſquieted and tortured by it all their days. And hence they become, in themſelves, as well as unto others, a "troubled ſea that cannot reſt," Iſa. lvii. 20.

It may be alſo in ſome caſes, under ſome violent temptations, or in miſtakes, God may thus obviate the accompliſhment of conceived ſin in his own. And there ſeems to be an inſtance

of it in his dealing with Jehoſaphat, who had deſigned, againſt the mind of God, to join in affinity with Ahab, and to ſend his ſhips with him to Tarſhiſh; but God breaks his ſhips by a wind, that he could not accompliſh what he deſigned. But in God's dealings with his in this way, there is a difference from the ſame diſpenſation towards others; for,

Firſt, It is ſo only in caſes of extraordinary temptation. When, through the violence of temptation, and craft of ſatan, they are hurried from under the conduct of the law of grace, God, one way or other, takes away their power, or may do ſo, that they ſhall not be able to execute what they have deſigned. But this is an ordinary way of dealing with wicked men. This hook of God is upon them in the whole courſe of their lives; and they ſtruggle with it, being as a wild bull in a net, Iſa. li. 20. God's net is upon them, and they are filled with fury, that they cannot do all the wickedneſs that they would.

Secondly, God doth it, not to leave them to wreſtle with ſin, and to attempt other ways of its accompliſhment, upon the failure of that which they were engaged in, but by their diſappointment awakens them to conſider their condition, and what they were doing, and ſo conſumes ſin in the womb, by ways that ſhall afterwards be inſiſted on. Some men's depravation of power, for the committing of conceived, contrived ſin, hath been ſanctified, to the changing of their hearts from all dalliances with that or other ſins.

Thirdly, God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived ſin, by oppoſing an external hindering power unto ſinners. He leaves them their lives, and he leaves them power to do what they intend, only he raiſeth up an oppoſite power, to coerce, forbid, and reſtrain them. An

inſtance whereof is this; Saul had ſworn that Jonathan ſhould be put to death, and, as far as appears, went on reſolutely to have ſlain him; God ſtirs up the ſpirit of the people, they oppoſe themſelves to the wrath and fury of Saul, and Jonathan is delivered, 1 Sam. xiv. 45. So alſo, when king Uzziah would have, in his own perſon, offered incenſe contrary to the law, eighty men of the prieſts reſiſted him, and drove him out of the temple, 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 18, 19. And to this head are to be referred all the aſſiſtances which God ſtirreth up for the deliverance of his people againſt the fury of perſecutors. He raiſeth up ſaviours, or deliverers, on mount Sion, to judge the mount of Edom. So when the dragon, and thoſe acting under him, ſpirited by him, were in a furious endeavour for the deſtruction of the church, Rev. xii. 16. God ſtirs up the earth to her aſſiſtance; even men of the world, not engaged with others in the deſign of ſatan, and by their oppoſition hinders them from the execution of their deſigned rage. Of this nature, ſeems to be that dealing of God with his own people, ſpoken of by the prophet, Hoſ. ii. 6, 7. they were in the purſuit of their iniquities, following after their lovers: God leaves them, for a time, to act in the folly of their ſpirits, but he ſets a hedge and a wall before them, that they ſhall not be able to fulfil their deſigns and luſts.

Fourthly, God obviates the accompliſhment of conceived ſin, by removing, or taking away, the objects on whom, or about whom, the ſin conceived to be committed, Acts xii. 11. yields us a ſignal inſtance of this iſſue of providence. When the day was coming wherein Herod thought to have ſlain Peter, who was ſhut up in priſon, God ſends and takes him away from their rage, and lying in wait. So alſo was our Saviour himſelf taken away from

the murderous rage of the Jews, before his hour was come, John viii. 59. chap x. 39. Both primitive and latter times are full of ſtories to this purpoſe: priſon doors have been opened, and poor creatures appointed to die, have been frequently reſcued from the jaws of death. In the world itſelf, amongſt the men thereof, adulterers, and adultereſſes, the ſin of the one is often hindered and ſtifled by the taking away of the other. So wings are given to the woman, to carry her into the wilderneſs, and to diſappoint the world in the execution of their rage, Rev. xii. 14.

Fifthly, God does this by ſome eminent diverſions of the thoughs of men who had conceived ſin. The brethren of Joſeph caſt him into a pit, Gen. xxxvii. 24. with an intent to famiſh him there: whilſt they were, as it ſeems, pleaſing themſelves with what they had done, God orders a company of merchants to come by, and diverts their thoughts with that new object, from the killing, to the ſelling, of their brother, ver, 26, 27. And how far therein they were ſubſervient to the infinitely wiſe counſel of God, we know. Thus alſo, when Saul was in purſuit of David, and was even ready to prevail againſt him to his deſtruction, God ſtirs up the Philiſtines to invade the land, which both diverted his thoughts, and drew the courſe of his actings another way, 1 Sam. xxvii. 27.

And theſe are ſome of the ways whereby God is pleaſed to hinder the bringing forth of conceived ſin, by oppoſing himſelf and his providence, to the power of the ſinning creature. And we may a little in our paſſage, take a brief view of the great advantages to faith and the church of God, which may be found in this matter. As,

Firſt, This may give us a little inſight into the ever to be adored providence of God, by theſe

and the like ways, in great variety, obſtructing the breaking forth of ſin in the world. It is he who makes thoſe dams, and ſhuts up thoſe flood gates of corrupted nature, that it ſhall not break forth in a deluge of filthy abominations, to overwhelm the creation with confuſion and diſorder. As it were of old, ſo it is at this day; "Every thought and imagination of the heart of man is evil, and that continually." That all the earth is not, in all places, filled with violence, as it was of old, is merely from the mighty hand of God, working effectually for the obſtructing of ſin. From hence alone it is, that the high-ways, ſtreets, and fields, are not all filled with violence, blood, rapine, uncleanneſs, and every villany that the heart of man can conceive. O the infinite beauty of divine wiſdom and providence in the government of world! for the conſervation of it aſks daily no leſs power and wiſdom than the firſt making did require.

Secondly, If we will look to our own concernments, they will, in a ſpecial manner, inforce us to adore the wiſdom and efficacy of the providence of God, in ſtopping the progreſs of conceived ſin. That we are at peace in our houſes, at reſt in our beds, that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone: whoſe perſon would not be defiled, or deſtroyed; whoſe habitation would not be ruined? whoſe blood, almoſt, would not be ſhed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived ſin? It may be, the ruin of ſome of us hath been conceived a thouſand times. We are beholden to this providence of obſtructing ſin, for our lives, our families, our eſtates, our liberties, for whatſoever is, or may be dear unto us. For may we not ſay ſometimes with the Pſalmiſt: "My ſoul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are ſet on fire, even

the ſons of men, whoſe teeth are ſpears and arrows, and their tongue a ſharp ſword" Pſal. lvii, 4. And how is the deliverance of men contrived from ſuch perſons? "God breaks their teeth in their mouths, even the great teeth of the young lions," lviii. 6. He keeps this fire from burning, or quencheth it when it is ready to break out into a flame. He breaks their ſpears and arrows, ſo that ſometimes we are not ſo much as wounded by them; Some he cuts off and deſtroys, ſome he cuts ſhort in their power, ſome he deprives of the inſtruments whereby alone they can work, ſome he prevents of their deſired opportunities, or diverts by other objects for their luſts, and oftentimes, cauſeth them to ſpend them among themſelves, one upon another. We may ſay therefore, with the Pſalmiſt: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wiſdom haſt thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches," civ. 24. and with the prophet, "Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things, prudent, and he ſhall know them: all the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them, but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein," Hoſ. xiv. 9.

Thirdly, If theſe, and the like, are the ways whereby God obviates the bringing forth of conceived ſin in wicked men, we may learn hence how miſerable their condition is, and in what perpetual torment, for the moſt part, they ſpend their days: They are like a "troubled ſea," ſaith the Lord, "that cannot reſt." As they endeavour that others may have no peace, ſo it is certain that themſelves have not any; the principle of ſin is not impaired nor weakened in them, the will of ſinning is not taken away: they have a womb of ſin, that is able to conceive monſters every moment. Yea, for the moſt part, they are forging and framing folly all the day long: one

luſt or other they are contriving how to ſatisfy: they are either devouring by malice and revenge, or vitiating by uncleanneſs, or trampling on by ambition, or ſwallowing down by covetouſneſs, all that ſtand before them. Many of their follies and miſchiefs they bring to the very birth, and are in pain to be delivered; but God every day fills them with diſappointment, and ſhuts up the womb of ſin. Some are filled with hatred of God's people all their days, and never once have an opportunity to exerciſe it. So David deſcribes them; "They return at evening, they make a noiſe like a dog, and go round about the city. They go up and down and belch out with their mouths; ſwords are in their lips," Pſal. lix. 6, 7. and yet are not able to accompliſh their deſigns; what torture do ſuch poor creatures live in? Envy, malice, wrath, revenge, devour their hearts by not getting vent. And when God hath exerciſed the other acts of his wiſe providence in cutting ſhort their power, or oppoſing a greater power to them, when nothing elſe will do, he cuts them off in their ſins, and to the grave they go, full of purpoſes of iniquity. Others are no leſs hurried and diverted by the power of other luſts, which they are not able to ſatisfy: this is the ſore travail they are exerciſed with all their days. If they accompliſh their deſigns, they are more wicked and helliſh than before; and if they do not, they are filled with vexation and diſcontentment. This is the portion of them who know not the Lord, nor the power of his grace. Envy not their condition, notwithſtanding their outward glittering ſhew, their hearts are full of anxiety, trouble and ſorrow.

Fourthly, Do we ſee, ſometimes, the floodgates of men's luſts and rage ſet open againſt the church, and intereſt of it, and doth prevalency

attend them, and power is, for a ſeaſon, on their ſide ; let not the ſaints of God deſpond. He hath unſpeakably various and effectual ways for the trifling of their conceptions, to give them dry breaſts, and a miſcarrying womb. He can ſtop their fury when he pleaſeth : " Surely," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, " the wrath of man ſhall praiſe thee, the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain," Pſal. lxxvi. 10. When ſo much of their wrath is let out, as ſhall exalt his praiſe, he can, when he pleaſeth, ſet up a power, greater than the combined ſtrength of all ſinning creatures, and reſtrain the remainder of the wrath that they had conceived. " He ſhall cut off the ſpirit of princes, he is terrible to the kings of the earth," Pſal. lxxvi. 12. Some he will cut off and deſtroy, ſome he will terrify and affright, and prevent the rage of all. He can knock them on the head, or break out their teeth, or chain up their wrath, and who can oppoſe him ?

Fifthly, Thoſe who have received benefit by any of the ways mentioned, may know to whom they owe their preſervation, and not look on it as a common thing. When you have conceived ſin, hath God weakened your power from ſin, or denied you opportunity, or took away the object of your luſts, or diverted your thoughts by new providences, know aſſuredly that you have received mercy thereby. Though God deal not theſe providences always in a ſubſerviency to the covenant of grace, yet there is always mercy in them, always a call in them, to conſider the author of them. Had not God thus dealt with you, it may be, you had this day been a terror to yourſelves, a ſhame to your relations, and under the puniſhment due to ſome notorious ſins which you had conceived. Beſides, there is commonly an additional guilt in ſin brought forth, above what is in the mere conception of it. It

may be, others would have been ruined by it here, or drawn into a partnerſhip in ſin by it, and ſo have been eternally ruined by it, all which are prevented by theſe providences; and eternity will witneſs, that there is a ſingularity of mercy in them. Do not look then on any ſuch things as common accidents, the hand of God is in them all; and that a merciful hand, if not deſpiſed: if it be, yet God doth good to others by it, the world is the better, and you are not ſo wicked as you would be.

Sixthly, We may alſo ſee hence the great uſe of magiſtracy in the world, that great appointment of God. Amongſt other things, it is peculiarly ſubſervient to this holy providence, in obſtructing the bringing forth of conceived ſin; namely, by the terror of him that bears the ſword. God fixes that on the hearts of evil men which he expreſſeth: "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for the power beareth not the ſword in vain, for he is the miniſter of God, a revenger to execute wrath on them that do evil," Rom. xiii. 4. God fixes this on the hearts of men, and by the dread and terror of it cloſeth the womb of ſin, that it ſhall not bring forth. When there was no king in Iſrael, none to put to rebuke, and none of whom evil men were afraid, there was woful work and havock amongſt the children of men made in the world, as we may ſee in the laſt chapters of the book of Judges. The greateſt mercies and bleſſings that in this world we are made partakers of, next to them of the goſpel and covenant of grace, come to us through this channel and conduit. And, indeed, this whereof we have been ſpeaking, is the proper work of magiſtracy, namely, to be ſubſervient to the providence of God, in obſtructing the bringing forth of conceived ſin.

Theſe, then, are ſome of the ways whereby God providentially prevents the bringing forth of ſin, by oppoſing obſtacles to the power of the ſinner. And by them ſin is not conſumed, but ſhut up in the womb. Men are not burthened for it, but with it; not laden in their hearts and conſciences with its guilt, but perplexed with its power, which they are not able to exert and ſatisfy.

The way that yet remains for conſideration, whereby God obviates the production of conceived ſin, is his working on the will of the ſinner, ſo making ſin to conſume away in the womb.

There are two ways, in general, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of conceived ſin, by working on the will of the ſinner; and they are, firſt, By reſtraining grace: ſecondly, By renewing grace. He doth it, ſometimes the one way, ſometimes the other. The firſt of theſe is common to regenerate and unregenerate perſons, the latter peculiar to believers; and God doth it variouſly, as to particulars, by them both. We ſhall begin with the firſt of them.

Firſt, God doth this in the way of reſtraining grace, by ſome arrow of particular conviction fixed in the heart and conſcience of the ſinner, in reference unto the particular ſin which he had conceived. This ſtaggers and changes the mind, as to the particular intended, cauſeth the hands to hang down, and the weapons of luſt to fall out of them. Hereby conceived ſin proves abortive. How God doth this work, by what immediate touches, ſtrokes, blows, rebukes of his ſpirit; by what reaſonings, arguments, and commotion of men's own conſciences, is not for us thoroughly to find out. It is done as was ſaid, in unſpeakable variety, and the works of God are paſt finding out. But as to what light may be given unto it from ſcripture-inſtances, after we have mani-

ſeſted the general way of God's procedure, it ſhall be inſiſted on.

Thus, then, God dealt in the caſe of Eſau and Jacob. Eſau had long conceived his brother's death; he comforted himſelf with the thoughts of it, and reſolutions about it, Gen. xxvii. 41. as is the manner of profligate ſinners. Upon his firſt opportunity, he comes forth to execute his intended rage, and Jacob concludes that he would "ſmite the mother with the children," chap. xxxii. 11. An opportunity is preſented unto this wicked and profane perſon, to bring forth that ſin that had lain in his heart now twenty years; he hath full power in his hand to perform his purpoſe. In the midſt of this poſture of things, God comes in upon his heart, with ſome ſecret and effectual working of his ſpirit and power, changeth him from his purpoſe, cauſeth his conceived ſin to melt away, that he falls upon the neck of him with embraces, whom he thought to have ſlain.

Of the ſame nature, though the way of it was peculiar, was his dealing with Laban the Syrian, in reference to the ſame Jacob, chap. xxxi. 24. By a dream, a viſion in the night, God hinders him from ſo much as ſpeaking roughly to him. It was with him as in Micah ii. 1. he had deviſed evil on his bed, and when he thought to have practiſed it in the morning, God interpoſed in a dream, and hides ſin from him, as he ſpeaks, Job. xxxiii. 15, 16, 17. To the ſame purpoſe is that of the Pſalmiſt concerning the people of God, "He made them to be pitied of all thoſe who carried them captives," Pſal. cvi. 46. Men uſually deal in rigour with thoſe whom they have taken captive in war. It was the way of old, to rule captives with force and cruelty. Here God turns and changes their hearts, not in general unto himſelf, but to this particular, of reſpect to his peo-

ple. And this way in general doth God every day prevent the bringing forth of a world of ſin. He ſharpens arrows of conviction upon the ſpirits of men, as to the particular that they are engaged in. Their hearts are not changed, as to ſin; but their minds are altered, as to this or that ſin. They break, it may be, the veſſel they had faſhioned, and go to work upon ſome other. Now that we may a little ſee into the ways whereby God doth accompliſh this work, we muſt premiſe the enſuing conſiderations.

Firſt, That the general medium wherein the matter of reſtraining grace doth conſiſt, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of ſin, doth lie in certain arguments or reaſonings, preſented to the mind of the ſinner, whereby he is induced to deſert his purpoſe, to change and alter his mind, as to the ſin he had conceived. Reaſons againſt it are preſented unto him, which prevail upon him to relinquiſh his deſign, and give over his purpoſe. This is the general way of the working of reſtraining grace, it is by arguments and reaſonings riſing up againſt the perpetration of conceived ſin.

Secondly, that no arguments or reaſonings, as ſuch, materially conſidered, are ſufficient to ſtop, or hinder any purpoſe of ſinning, or to cauſe conceived ſin to prove abortive, if the ſinner have power and opportunity to bring it forth. They are not, in themſelves, and on their own account, reſtraining grace; for if they were, the adminiſtration and communication of grace, as grace, were left unto every man who is able to give advice againſt ſin. Nothing is, nor can be called grace, though common, and ſuch as may periſh, but with reſpect to its peculiar relation to God. God, by the power of his Spirit, making arguments and reaſons effectual and prevailing, turns

that to be grace, I mean of this kind, which in itſelf, and in its own nature, was bare reaſon. And that efficacy of the Spirit, which the Lord puts forth in theſe perſuaſions and motives, is that which we call reſtraining grace. Theſe things being premiſed we ſhall now conſider ſome of the arguments which we find that he hath made uſe of to this end and purpoſe.

Firſt, God ſtops many men in their ways upon the conception of ſin, by an argument taken from the difficulty, if not impoſſibility, of doing that they aim at. They have a mind unto it, but God ſets an hedge and a wall before them, that they ſhall judge it to be ſo hard and difficult to accompliſh what they intend, that it is better for them to let it alone, and give it over. Thus Herod would have put John Baptiſt to death upon the firſt provocation, but he feared the multitude, becauſe they accounted him as a prophet, Matth. xiv. 5. He had conceived his murder, and was free from the execution of it. God raiſed this conſideration in his heart, If I kill him, the people will tumultuate, he hath a great party amongſt them, and ſedition will ariſe, that may coſt me my life, or kingdom. He feared the multitude, and durſt not execute the wickedneſs he had conceived, becauſe of the difficulty he fore-ſaw he ſhould be entangled withal. And God made the argument effectual for the ſeaſon: for otherwiſe we know that men will venture the utmoſt hazards for the ſatisfaction of their luſts; as he did afterwards. The Phariſees were in the very ſame ſtate and condition, Matth. xxi. 26. they would fain have decried the miniſtry of John, but durſt not for fear of the people; and, by the ſame argument were they deterred from killing our Saviour, ver. 46. who had highly provoked them by a parable, ſetting out their deſerved and approaching deſtruction.

They durſt not do it for fear of a tumult among the people, ſeeing they looked on him as a prophet. Thus God over-awes the hearts of innumerable perſons in the world every day, and cauſeth them to deſiſt from attempting to bring forth the ſins which they had conceived. Difficulties they ſhall be ſure to meet withal; yea, it is likely, if they ſhould attempt it, it would prove impoſſible for them to accompliſh. We owe much of our quiet in this world, unto the efficacy given to this conſideration in the hearts of men, by the Holy Ghoſt: Adulteries, rapines, murders, are obviated and ſtifled by it. Men would engage into them daily, but that they judge it impoſſible for them to fulfil what they aimed at.

Secondly, God doth it by an argument taken *ab incommodo*, from the inconveniencies, evils, and troubles that will befall men in the purſuit of ſin. If they follow it, this or that inconvenience will enſue, this trouble, this evil, temporal or eternal. And this argument, as managed by the ſpirit of God, is the great engine in his hand, whereby he caſts up banks, and gives bounds to the luſts of men, that they break not out, to the confuſion of all that order and beauty which remains in the works of his hands. Paul gives us the general import of this argument, "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing, or elſe excuſing one another." Rom. ii. 14. 15. If any men in the world may be thought to be given up to purſue and fulfil all the ſins that their luſts can conceive, it is thoſe that have not the law, to whom the written law of God doth not denounce the evil that attends it. But

though they have it not, ſaith the apoſtle, they ſhew forth the work of it, they do many things which it requireth, and forbear, or abſtain from many things that it forbiddeth, and ſo ſhew forth its work and efficacy. But whence is it that they do ſo? Why their thoughts accuſe or excuſe them. It is from their conſiderations and arguing that they have within themſelves about ſin, and its conſequents, which prevail upon them to abſtain from many things that their hearts would carry them out unto. For conſcience is a man's pre-judging of himſelf, with reſpect unto the future judgment of God. Thus Felix was ſtaggered in his purſuit of ſin, when he trembled at Paul's preaching of righteouſneſs and judgment to come." Acts xxiv. 26. So Job tells us, that the conſideration of puniſhment from God, hath a ſtrong influence on the minds of men, to keep them from ſin," Job xxxi. 1—3. How the Lord makes uſe of that conſideration, even towards his own, when they have broken the cords of his love, and caſt off the rule of his grace for a ſeaſon, I have before declared.

Thirdly, God doth this ſame work, by making effectual an argument, *ab inutili*, from the unprofitableneſs of the thing that men are engaged in. By this were the brethren of Joſeph ſtayed from ſlaying him: "What profit is it," ſay they, "if we ſlay our brother, and conceal his blood? Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27. we ſhall get nothing by it, it will bring in no advantage or ſatisfaction unto us. And the heads of this way of God's obſtructing conceived ſin, or the ſprings of theſe kinds of arguments, are ſo many and various that it is impoſſible to inſiſt particularly upon them. There is nothing preſent, or to come, nothing belonging to this life, or nothing deſirable or undeſirable, nothing good or evil, but at one time or another,

an argument may be taken from it for the obſtructing of ſin.

Fourthly, God accompliſheth this work by arguments taken *ab honeſto*, from what is good and honeſt, what is comely, praiſe-worthy and acceptable unto himſelf. This is the great road wherein he walks with his ſaints under their temptations, or in their conceptions of ſin. He recovers effectually upon their minds a conſideration of all thoſe ſprings and motives to obedience, which are diſcovered and propoſed in the goſpel; ſome at one time, ſome at another. He minds them of his own love, mercy, and kindneſs; his eternal love, with the fruits of it, whereof themſelves have been made partakers. He minds them of the blood of his Son, his croſs, ſufferings, tremendous undertaking in the work of mediation, and the concernment of his heart, love, honour, name, in their obedience. Minds them of the love of the Spirit, with all his conſolations which they have been made partakers of, and privileges wherewith, by him, they have been intruſted. Minds them of the goſpel, the glory and beauty of it as revealed unto their ſouls. Minds them of the excellency and comelineſs of obedience, of their performance of thatduty they owe to God, that peace, quietneſs, and ſerenity of mind, that they have enjoyed therein. On the other ſide, he minds them of being a provocation by ſin unto the eyes of his glory, ſaying in their hearts: "Do not that abominable thing which my ſoul hateth." Minds them of their wounding the Lord Chriſt, and putting him to ſhame; of their grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby they are ſealed to the day of redemption; of their defiling his dwelling-place. Minds them of the reproach, diſhonours, ſcandal which they bring on the goſpel, and the profeſſion thereof. Minds them

of the terrors, darkneſs, wounds, want of peace, that they may bring upon their own ſouls. From theſe and like conſiderations, doth God put a ſtop to the progreſs of the law of ſin in the heart, that it ſhall not go on to bring forth the evil which it hath conceived. I could give inſtances in arguments of all theſe ſeveral kinds, recorded in the ſcripture, but it would be too long a work for us, who are now engaged in a deſign of another nature. But one or two examples may be mentioned. Joſeph reſiſts his firſt temptation on one of theſe accounts: "How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. The evil of ſinning againſt God, his God, that conſideration alone detains him from the leaſt inclination to his temptation. It is ſin againſt God, to whom I owe all obedience; the God of my life, and of all my mercies, I will not do it. The argument wherewith Abigail prevailed on David, to with-hold him from ſelf-revenge and murder, was of the ſame nature, and he acknowledgeth that it was from the Lord, 1 Sam. xxv. 31, 32. I ſhall add no more, for all the ſcripture-motives which we have to duty, made effectual by grace, are inſtances of this way of God's procedure.

Sometimes, I confeſs, God ſecretly works the hearts of men, by his own finger, without the uſe and means of ſuch arguments as thoſe inſiſted on, to ſtop the progreſs of ſin. So he tells Abimelech, "I have with-held thee from ſinning againſt me," Gen. xx. 6. Now this could not be done by any of the arguments which we have inſiſted on, becauſe Abimelech knew not that the thing which he intended was ſin; and therefore he pleads, that in the "integrity of his heart and innocency of his hands he did it," ver. 5. God turned about his will and thoughts, that he ſhould not accom-

pliſh his intention; but by what ways or means is not revealed. Nor is it evident what courſe he took in the change of Eſau's heart, when he came out againſt his brother, to deſtroy him, Gen. xxxiii. 4. Whether he ſtirred up in him a freſh ſpring of natural affections, or cauſed him to conſider what grief, by this means, he ſhould bring to his aged father, who loved him ſo tenderly; or whether, being now grown great and wealthy, he more and more deſpiſed the matter of difference between him and his brother, and ſo utterly ſlighted it, it is not known. It may be, God did it by an immediate powerful act of his Spirit upon his heart, without the actual intervention of any of theſe or the like conſiderations. Now, though the things mentioned, are in themſelves, at other times, feeble and weak, yet when they are managed by the ſpirit of God to ſuch an end and purpoſe, they certainly become effectual, and are the matter of his preventing grace.

Firſt, God prevents the bringing forth of conceived ſin, by real ſpiritual ſaving grace; and that either in the firſt converſation of ſinners, or in the following ſupplies of it. This is one part of the myſtery of his grace and love. He meets men ſometimes in their higheſt reſolutions for ſin, with the higheſt efficacy of his grace. Hereby he manifeſts the power of his own grace, and gives the ſoul a farther experience of the law of ſin, when it takes ſuch a farewell of it, as to be changed in the midſt of its reſolutions to ſerve the luſts thereof. By this he melts down the luſts of men, cauſeth them to wither at the root, that they ſhall no more ſtrive to bring forth what they have conceived, but be filled with ſhame and ſorrow at their conception. An example and inſtance of this proceeding of God, for the uſe and

inſtruction of all generations, we have in Paul. His heart was full of wickedneſs, blaſphemy, and perſecution; his conception of them was come unto rage and madneſs, and a full purpoſe of exerciſing them all to the utmoſt; ſo the ſtory relates it, Acts ix. ſo himſelf declares the ſtate to have been with him, Acts xxvi. 9—12. 1 Tim. i. 13. In the midſt of all this violent purſuit of ſin, a voice from heaven ſhuts up the womb, and dries the breaſts of it, and he cries, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Act ix. 6. The ſame perſon ſeems to intimate, that this is the way of God's procedure with others, even to meet them with his converting grace, in the height of their ſin and folly. For he himſelf, he ſays, was a pattern of God's dealing with others; as he dealt with him, ſo alſo would he do with ſome ſuch like ſinners. "For this cauſe I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, as a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him to life everlaſting," 1 Tim. i. 16. And we have not a few examples of it in our own days. Sundry perſons, on ſet purpoſe, going to this or that place, to deride and ſcoff at the diſpenſation of the word, have been met withal in the very place wherein they deſigned to ſerve their luſts and ſatan, and have been caſt down at the foot of God. This way of God's dealing with ſinners is at large ſet forth in Job xxxiii. 15—18. Dionyſius the Areopagite is another inſtance of this work of God's grace and love. Paul is dragged either by him, or before him, to plead for his life, as a ſetter forth of ſtrange gods, which at Athens was death by the law. In the midſt of this frame of ſpirit God meets with him by converting grace, ſin withers in the womb, and he cleaves to Paul and his doctrine," Acts xvii. 18—34. The like diſ-

penſation towards Iſrael we have, Hoſea xi. 7—10. But there is no need to inſiſt on more inſtances of this obſervation. God is pleaſed to leave no generation unconvinced of this truth, if they do but attend to their own experiences, and the examples of this work of his mercy amongſt them. Every day, one or other, is taken in the fulneſs of the purpoſe of his heart to go on in ſin, in this or that ſin, and is ſtopt in his courſe by the power of converting grace.

Secondly, God doth it by the ſame grace in the renewed communications of it, that is, by ſpecial aſſiſting grace. This is the common way of his dealing with believers in this caſe. That they alſo through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, may be carried on to the conceiving of this or that ſin, was before declared. God puts a ſtop to their progreſs, or rather to the prevalency of the law of ſin in them, and that by giving in unto them ſpecial aſſiſtances, needful for their preſervation and deliverance. As David ſays of himſelf, "His feet were almoſt gone, his ſteps had well nigh ſlipt," Pſal. lxxiii. 2; he was at the brink of unbelieving deſpairing thoughts, and concluſions about God's providence in the government of the world; from whence he was recovered, as he afterwards declares. So is it with many a believer, he is oftentimes at the very brink, at the very door of ſome folly or iniquity, when God puts in, by the efficacy of actually aſſiſting grace, and recovers them to an obediential frame of heart again. And this is a peculiar work of Chriſt, wherein he manifeſts and exerts his faithfulneſs towards his own: "he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18. It is not an abſolute power, but a power cloathed with mercy, that is intended. Such a power as is put forth from a ſenſe of the ſuffering of poor believers, under

their temptations. And how doth he exerciſe this merciful ability towards us? He gives forth, and we find in him, grace to help in a time of need;" Heb. iv. 16. ſeaſonable help and aſſiſtance for our deliverance, when we are ready to be over-powered by ſin and and temptation. When luſt hath conceived, and is ready to bring forth, when the ſoul lies at the brink of ſome iniquity, he gives in ſeaſonable help, relief, deliverance and ſafety. Here lies a great part of the care and faithfulneſs of Chriſt towards his poor ſaints; he will not ſuffer them to be worried with the power of ſin, nor to be carried out unto ways that ſhall diſhonour the goſpel, or fill them with ſhame and reproach, and ſo render them uſeleſs in the world; but he ſteps in with the ſaving relief and aſſiſtance of his grace, ſtops the courſe of ſin, and makes them, in himſelf, "more than conquerers." And this aſſiſtance lies under the promiſe; "There hath no temptation taken you but ſuch as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will, with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that you may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. x. 13. Temptation ſhall try us, it is for our good; many holy ends doth the Lord compaſs and bring about by it. But when we are tried to the utmoſt of our ability, ſo that one aſſault more would overbear us, a way of eſcape is provided. And as this may be done ſeveral ways, as I have elſewhere declared, ſo this we are now upon, is one of the moſt eminent, namely, by ſupplies of grace, to enable the ſoul to bear up, reſiſt, and conquer. And when once God begins to deal in this way of love with a ſoul, he will not ceaſe to add one ſupply after another, until the whole work of his grace and faithfulneſs be accompliſhed. An example hereof we have Iſa. lvii. 17, 18. poor

ſinners they are ſo far captivated to the power of their luſts, that the firſt and ſecond dealings of God with them, are not effectual for their delivery; but he will not give over, he is in the purſuit of a deſign of love towards them, and ſo ceaſeth not until they are recovered. Theſe are the general heads of the ſecond way whereby God hinders the bringing forth of conceived ſin, namely, by working on the will of the ſinner. He doth it, either by common convictions, or ſpecial grace, ſo that, of their own accord, they ſhall let go the purpoſe and will of ſinning that they are riſen up unto. And this is no mean way of his providing for his own glory, and the honour of his goſpel in the world, whoſe profeſſors would ſtain the whole beauty of it, were they left to themſelves to bring forth all the evil that is conceived in their hearts.

Beſides theſe general ways, there is one yet more ſpecial, that at once worketh both upon the power and will of the ſinner; and this is the way of afflictions, concerning which, one word ſhall cloſe this diſcourſe. Afflictions, I ſay, work by both theſe ways, in reference unto conceived ſin. They work providentially on the power of the creature. When a man hath conceived a ſin, and is in full purpoſe of the purſuit of it, God oftentimes ſends a ſickneſs, and abates his ſtrength, or a loſs cuts him ſhort in his plenty, and ſo takes him off in the purſuit of his luſts, though it may be, his heart is not weaned from them. His power is weakened, and he cannot do the evil he would. In this ſenſe, it belongs to the firſt way of God's obviating the production of ſin. Great afflictions work ſometimes, not from their own nature immediately and directly, but from the gracious purpoſe and intendment of him that ſends them. He inſinuates into the diſpenſation of them

that of grace and power, of love and kindneſs, which ſhall effectually take off the heart and mind from ſin. "Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I learnt thy commandments," Pſal. cxix. 67. And in this way, becauſe of the predominancy of renewing and aſſiſting grace, they belong unto the latter means of preventing ſin.

And theſe are ſome of the ways, whereby it pleaſeth God to put a ſtop to the progreſs of ſin, both in believers and unbelievers, which at preſent we ſhall inſtance in; and if we would endeavour farther to ſearch out his ways unto perfection, yet we muſt ſtill conclude, that it is but a "little portion which we know of him."

CHAP. XIV.

The power of ſin farther demonſtrated by the effects it hath had in the lives of profeſſors. Firſt, In actual ſins. Secondly, In habitual declenſions.

WE are now to proceed unto other evidences of that ſad truth which we are in the deſtration of. But the main of our work being paſt through, I ſhall be more brief in the management of the arguments that do remain.

That, then, which in the next place may be fixed upon, is the demonſtration which this law of ſin hath, in all ages, given of its power and efficacy, by the woful fruits that it hath brought forth, even in believers themſelves. Now theſe are of two ſorts. Firſt, The great actual eruptions of ſin in their lives. Secondly, Their habitual de-

cleanſion from the frames, ſtate, and condition of obedience, and communion with God, which they had obtained, both which, by the rules of James before unfolded, are to be laid to the account of this of law ſin, and belong unto the fourth head of its progreſs, and are both of them convincing evidences of its power and efficacy.

Firſt, Conſider the fearful eruptions of actual ſins that have been in the lives of believers, and we ſhall find our poſition evidenced. Should I go through, at large, with this conſideration, I muſt recount all the ſad and ſcandalous failings of the ſaints, that are left on record in the holy ſcripture. But the particulars of them are known to all; ſo that I ſhall not need to mention them, nor the many aggravations that, in their circumſtances, they are attended with: Only ſome few things, tending to the rendering of our preſent conſideration of them uſeful, may be remarked. As,

Firſt, They are, moſt of them, in the lives of men that were not of the loweſt form, or ordinary ſort of believers, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them, on the account of their walking with God in their generations. Such were Noah, Lot, David, Hezekiah, and others. They were not men of an ordinary ſize, but higher than their brethren by the ſhoulders and upwards in profeſſion, yea, in real holineſs. And, ſurely, that muſt needs be of a mighty efficacy, that could hurry ſuch giants in the ways of God into ſuch abominable ſins as they fell into. An ordinary engine could never have turned them out of the courſe of their obedience. It was a poiſon that no athletic conſtitution of ſpiritual health, no antidote could withſtand.

Secondly, And theſe very men, fell not into their great ſins at the beginning of their profeſſi-

on, when they had but little experience of the goodneſs of God, of the ſweetneſs and pleaſantneſs of obedience, of the power and craft of ſin, of its impulſions, ſolicitations and ſurpriſals, but after a long courſe of walking with God, and acquaintance with all theſe things, together with innumerable motives unto watchfulneſs. Noah, according to the lives of men in thoſe days of the world, had walked uprightly with God ſome hundreds of years, before he was ſo ſurprized as he was. Righteous Lot ſeems to have been towards the end of his days, 'ere he defiled himſelf with the abominations recorded. David, in a ſhort life, had as much experience of grace and ſin, and as much cloſe ſpiritual communion with God, as ever had any of the ſons of men, before he was caſt to the ground by this law of ſin. So was it with Hezekiah, in his degree, which was none of the meaneſt. Now to ſet upon ſuch perſons, ſo well acquainted with its power and deceit, ſo armed and provided againſt it, that had been conquerors over it for ſo many years, and to prevail againſt them, it argues a power and efficacy, too mighty for every thing but the Spirit of the Almighty to withſtand. Who can look to have a greater ſtock of inherent grace than thoſe men had? To have more experience of God and the excellency of his ways, the ſweetneſs of his love, and of communion with him, than they had? Who hath either better furniture to oppoſe ſin withal, or more obligations ſo to do, than they? And yet we ſee how fearfully they were prevailed againſt.

Thirdly, As if God had permitted ther falls on ſet purpoſe, that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy, they all of them fell out when they had newly received great and ſtupendous mercies from the hand of God, that ought

to have been ſtrong obligations unto diligence and watchfulneſs in cloſe obedience. Noah was but newly come forth of that world of waters, wherein he ſaw the ungodly world periſhing for their ſins, and himſelf preſerved by that aſtoniſhing miracle which all ages muſt admire: whilſt the world's deſolation was an hourly remembrancer unto him of his ſtrange preſervation by the immediate care and hand of God, he falls into drunkenneſs. Lot had newly ſeen that, at which every one that thinks on cannot but tremble. He ſaw, as one ſpeaks, hell coming out of heaven upon unclean ſinners, the greateſt evidence, except the croſs of Chriſt, that God ever gave in his providence, of the judgment to come. He ſaw himſelf and children delivered, by the ſpecial care and miraculous hand of God; and yet, whilſt theſe ſtrange mercies were freſh upon him, he fell into drunkenneſs and inceſt. David was delivered out of all his troubles, and had the necks of his enemies given him round about, and he makes uſe of his peace, from a world of trials and troubles, to contrive murder and adultery. Immediately, it was, after Hezekiah's great and miraculous deliverance, that he falls into his carnal pride and boaſting. I ſay, their falls, in ſuch ſeaſons, ſeem to be permitted on ſet purpoſe, to inſtruct us all in the truth that we have in hand; ſo that no perſons, in no ſeaſons, with what furniture of grace ſoever, can promiſe themſelves ſecurity from its prevalency any other ways, than by keeping cloſe conſtantly to him, who hath ſupplies to give out, that are above its reach and efficacy. Methinks this ſhould make us look about us. Are we better than Noah, who had that teſtimony from God, that he was a "perfect man in his generation, and walked with God?" Are we better than Lot, whoſe "righteous ſoul was vexed with

the evil deeds of ungodly men, for which he is commended by the Holy Ghoſt? Are we more holy, wiſe, and watchful than David, who obtained this teſtimony, that he was "a man after God's own heart?" Or, better than Hezekiah, who appealed to God himſelf, that he had ſerved him "uprightly with a perfect heart?" and yet, what prevalency this law of ſin wrought in and over them, we ſee. And there is no end of the like examples. They are all ſet up as buoys to diſcover unto us the ſands, the ſhelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their ſhipwreck, to their hazard, danger, loſs, yea, and would have done to their ruin, had not God been pleaſed, in his faithfulneſs, graciouſly to prevent it. And this is the firſt part of this evidence of the power of ſin from its effects.

In the ſecond part, it manifeſts its power, in the habitual declenſions from zeal and holineſs, from the frames, ſtate and condition of obedience, and communion with God, whereunto they had attained, which are found in many believers. Promiſes of growth and improvement are many, and precious; the means excellent and effectual; the benefits great and unſpeakable; yet it often falls out, that inſtead hereof, decays and declenſions are found upon profeſſors, yea, in and upon many of the ſaints of God. Now, whereas this muſt need principally and chiefly be from the ſtrength and efficacy of indwelling ſin, and is therefore a great evidence thereof; I ſhall firſt evince the obſervation itſelf to be true: namely, That ſome of the ſaints themſelves, do oftentimes ſo decline from that growth and improvement in faith, grace and holineſs, which might juſtly be expected from them; and then ſhew, that the cauſe of this evil lies in that that we are treating of: and that it is the cauſe of total apoſtacy in

unſound profeſſors, ſhall be afterwards declared. But this is a greater work which we have in hand. The prevailing upon true believers, unto a ſinful declenſion, and gradual apoſtacy, requires a putting forth of more ſtrength and efficacy than the prevailing upon unſound profeſſors unto total apoſtaſy. As the wind which will blow down a dead tree that hath no root, to the ground, will ſcarcely ſhake or bow a living well-rooted tree. But this it will do. There is mention made in the ſcripture of the firſt ways of David, and they are commended above his latter, 2 Chron. xvii. 3. The laſt ways, even of David, were tainted with the power of indwelling ſin. Though we have mention only of the actual eruption of ſin, yet that uncleanneſs, and pride which were working in him in his numbering of the people, were certainly rooted in a declenſion from his firſt frame. Thoſe ruſhes did not grow without mire. David would not have done ſo in his younger days, when he followed God in the wilderneſs of temptations and trials, full of faith, love, humility, brokenneſs of heart, zeal, tender affection unto all the ordinances of God, all which were eminent in him. But his ſtrength is impaired by the efficacy and deceitfulneſs of ſin; his locks cut, and he becomes a prey to vile luſts and temptations. We have a notable inſtance in moſt of the churches that our Saviour awakens to the conſideration of their condition, in the Revelations: we may ſingle out one of them: many good things there were in the church of Epheſus, for which it is greatly commended, Rev. ii. 2, 3. but yet it is charged with a decay, a declenſion, a gradual falling off and apoſtaſy: "Thou haſt left thy firſt love, remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and do thy firſt works," ver. 4, 5. There was a decay, both inward in the frame of heart,

as to faith and love, and outward, as to obedience and works, in compariſon of what they had formerly, by the teſtimony of Chriſt himſelf. The ſame alſo might be ſhewed concerning the reſt of thoſe churches, only one or two of them excepted. Five of them are charged with decays and declenſions. Hence, there is mention, in the ſcripture, of the "kindneſs of youth," of the "love of eſpouſals," with great commendation, Jer. ii. 2, 3. of our "firſt faith," 1 Tim. v. 12. of the "beginning of our confidence," Heb. iii. 14. And cautions are given, that "we loſe not the things that we have wrought," 2 John 8. But what need we look back or ſearch for inſtances to confirm the truth of this obſervation? An habitual declenſion from firſt engagements unto God, from firſt attainments of communion with God, from firſt ſtrictneſs in duties and obedience, is ordinary and common amongſt profeſſors. Might we, to this purpoſe, take a general view of the profeſſors in theſe nations, among whom the lot of the beſt of us will be found, in part or in whole, in ſomewhat or in all, to fall; we might be plentifully convinced of the truth of this obſervation. Is their zeal for God as warm, lively, vigorous, effectual, ſolicitous, as it was in their firſt giving themſelves unto God? Or, rather, is there not a common, ſlight, ſelfiſh frame of ſpirit, come in the room of it, upon moſt profeſſors? Iniquity hath abounded, and their love hath waxed cold. Was it not of old a burthen to their ſpirits to hear the name, and ways, and worſhip of God blaſphemed and profaned? Could they not have ſaid, with the Pſalmiſt, "Rivers of water run down our eyes, becauſe men keep not thy law?" Pſal. cxix. 136. Were not their ſouls ſolicitous about the intereſt of Chriſt in the world, like Eli's about the ark? Did they not contend earneſtly

for the "truth once delivered to the ſaints," and every parcel of it, eſpecially wherein the grace of God, and the glory of the goſpel were eſpecially concerned? Did they not labour to judge and condemn the world, by an holy and ſeparate converſation? And do now the generality of profeſſors abide in this frame? Have they grown and made improvement in it? Or is there not a coldneſs and indifferency grown upon the ſpirits of many in this thing? Yea, do not many deſpiſe all theſe things, and look upon their own former zeal as folly? May we not ſee many, who have formerly been in eſteem in ways of profeſſion, become daily a ſcorn and reproach, through their miſcarriages, and that juſtly, to the men of the world? Is it not with them, as it was of old with the daughters of Sion, Iſa. iii. 24. when God judged them for their ſins and wantonneſs? Hath not the world, and ſelf, utterly ruined their profeſſion? and are they not regardleſs of the things wherein they have formerly declared a ſingular concernment? Yea, are not ſome come, partly on one pretence, partly on another, to an open enmity unto, and hatred of, the ways of God? they pleaſe them no more, but are evil in their eyes. But, not to mention ſuch open apoſtates any farther, whoſe hypocriſy the Lord Jeſus Chriſt will ſhortly judge; how is it with the beſt? Are not almoſt all men grown cold and ſlack as to theſe things? Are they not leſs concerned in them than formerly? Are they not grown weary, ſelfiſh in their religion, and ſo things be indifferent well at home, ſcarce care how they go abroad in the world? at leaſt, do they not prefer their eaſe, credit, ſafety, ſecular advantages before theſe things? A frame that Chriſt abhors, and declares, that thoſe in whom it is found, are none of his. Some, indeed, ſeem to retain a good zeal for truth; but where-

in they make the faireſt appearance, therein will they be found to be moſt abominable. They cry out againſt errors, not for truth, but for party and intereſt's ſake. Let a man be on their party, and promote their intereſt, be he never ſo corrupt in his judgment, he is embraced, and, it may be, admired. This is not zeal for God, but for a man's ſelf. It is not, "the zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up;" but, "Maſter, forbid them, becauſe they follow not with us." Better, it were, doubtleſs, for men never to pretend unto any zeal at all than to ſubſtitute ſuch wrathful ſelfiſhneſs in the room of it.

Secondly, Is men's delight in the ordinances and worſhip of God the ſame as in former days? Do they find the ſame ſweetneſs and reliſh in them, as they have done of old? How precious hath the word been to them formerly? What joy and delight have they had in attendance thereon? How would they have run and gone to have been made partakers of it where it was diſpenſed in its power and purity, in the evidence and demonſtration of the Spirit? Did they not call the Sabbath their delight, and was not the approach of it a real joy unto their ſouls? Did they not long after the converſe and communion of ſaints? And could they not undergo manifold perils for the attainment of it? And doth this frame ſtill abide upon them? Are there not decays and declenſions to be found amongſt them? May it not be ſaid, "Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not?" Yea, are not men ready to ſay, with them of old, "What a wearineſs is it?" Mal. i. 3. It is even a burden and a wearineſs to be tied up to the obſervation of all theſe ordinances. What need we be all ſo ſtrict in the obſervation of the Sabbath? What need we hear ſo often? What need of this diſtinction

in hearing? Inſenſibly a great diſreſpect, yea, even a contempt, of the pleaſant and excellent ways of Chriſt and his goſpel is fallen upon many profeſſors.

Thirdly, May not the ſame conviction be farther carried on, by an inquiry into the univerſal courſe of obedience, and the performance of duties that men have been engaged in? Is there the ſame conſcientious tenderneſs of ſinning abiding in many as was in days of old? the ſame exact performance of private duties? the ſame love to the brethren? the ſame readineſs for the croſs? the ſame humility of mind and ſpirit? the ſame ſelf-denial? The ſteam of men's luſts, wherewith the air is tainted, will not ſuffer us ſo to ſay.

We need then go no farther than this wretched generation wherein we live, to evince the truth of the obſervation laid down, as the foundation of the inſtance inſiſted on; the Lord give repentance before it be too late.

Now all theſe declenſions, all theſe decays, that are found in ſome profeſſors, they all proceed from this root and cauſe, they are all the product of indwelling ſin, and all evince the exceeding power and efficacy of it. For the proof whereof I ſhall not need to go further than the general rule, which, out of James, we have already conſidered; namely, that luſt, or indwelling ſin, is the cauſe of all actual ſin, and all habitual declenſions in believers. This is that which the apoſtle intends, in that place, to teach and declare. I ſhall, therefore, handle theſe two things, and ſhew, Firſt, That this doth evince a great efficacy and power in ſin. Secondly, Declare the ways and means whereby it brings forth, or brings about, this curſed effect; all in deſign of our general end, in calling upon, and cautioning, believers to avoid it, to oppoſe it.

First, It appears to be a work of great power and efficacy, from the provision that is made against it, which it prevails over. There is, in the covenant of grace, plentiful provision made, not only for the preventing of declensions and decay in believers, but also for their continual carrying on towards perfection. As,

1st. The Word itself, and all the ordinances of the gospel, are appointed and given unto us for this end, Ephes. iv. 11—15. That which is the end of giving gospel officers to the church, is the end also of giving all the ordinances to be administered by them. For they are given for "the work of the ministry," that is, for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel. Now what is, or what are, these ends? They are all for the preventing of decays and declensions in the saints, all for the carrying them on to perfection, ver. 12. In general, it is for "the perfecting of the saints," carrying on the work of grace in them, and the work of holiness and obedience by them: or, "for the edifying of the body of Christ;" their building up in an increase of faith and love, even of every true member of the mystical body. But how far are they appointed thus to carry them on, thus to build them up? Hath it bounds fixed to its work? Doth it carry them so far and then leave them? No, saith the apostle," Ephes. iv. 13. The dispensation of the word of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummate. It is appointed to perfect and complete that faith, knowledge, and growth in grace and holiness which is allotted unto us in this world. But what if oppositions and temptations do lie in the way, satan and his instruments working with great subtilty and deceit? Why, these

ordinances are deſigned for our ſafe-guarding and deliverance from all their attempts and aſſaults, ver. 14. that ſo, being preſerved in the uſe of them, or "ſpeaking the truth in love, we may grow up unto him in all things who is the head, even Chriſt Jeſus." This is, in general, the uſe of all goſpel-ordinances, the chief and main end for which they were given and appointed by God; namely, to preſerve believers from all decays of faith and obedience, and to carry them on ſtill towards perfection. Theſe are means which God, the good huſbandman makes uſe of, to cauſe the vine to thrive and bring forth fruit. And I could alſo manifeſt the ſame to be the ſpecial end of them diſtinctly. Briefly, The Word is milk and ſtrong meat, for the nouriſhing and ſtrengthening of all ſorts, and all degrees of believers. It hath both ſeed and water in it, and manuring with it, to make them fruitful. The ordinance of the ſupper is appointed on purpoſe for the ſtrengthening of our faith, in the remembrance of the death of the Lord, and the exerciſe of love one towards another. The communion of ſaints is for the edifying each other in faith, love, and obedience.

Secondly, There is that which adds weight to this conſideration. God ſuffers us not to be unmindful of this aſſiſtance he hath afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make uſe of the means appointed for the attaining of the end propoſed. He ſhews them unto us, as the angel ſhewed the water-ſpring to Hagar. Commands, exhortations, promiſes, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpoſe; ſee them ſummed up, Heb. ii. 1. He is continually ſaying to us, Why will you die? Why will you wither and decay? Come to the paſtures prepared for you, and your ſouls ſhall live. If we ſee a lamb run from the fold into the

wilderneſs, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beaſts: if we ſee a ſheep leavnig its green paſtures and water-courſes, to abide in dry barren heaths, we count it no marvel, nor inquire farther, if we ſee him lean, and ready to periſh. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldneſs and rage of the beaſts of prey, that durſt ſet upon them there. If we ſee ſheep pining in full paſtures, we judge them to be diſeaſed and unſound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forſake their own mercies, and run away from the paſture and fold of Chriſt in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers luſts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to ſee men living under, and enjoying, all the means of ſpiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flouriſhing, but rather daily to pine and wither, this argues ſome ſecret powerful diſtemper, whoſe poiſonous and noxious qualities, hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy, This is indwelling ſin. So wonderfully powerful, ſo effectually poiſonous is it, that it can bring leanneſs on the ſouls of men, in the midſt of all precious means of growth and flouriſhing. It may well make us tremble, to ſee men living under, and in the uſe of, the means of the goſpel, preaching, praying, adminiſtration of ſacraments, and yet grow colder every day than other; in zeal for God, more ſelfiſh and worldly, even habitually to decline, as to the degrees of holineſs which they had attained unto.

Thirdly, Together with the diſpenſation of the outward means of ſpiritual growth or improvement, there are alſo ſupplies of grace continually afforded the ſaints from their head, Chriſt Jeſus. He is the head of all the ſaints. , And he is a living head, and ſo a living head, as that he tells us, that "becauſe he liveth, we ſhall live alſo,"

John. xiv. 19. He communicates of ſpiritual life to all that are his. In him is the fountain of our life, which is therefore ſaid to be "hid with him in God," Col. iii. 3. And this life he gives unto his ſaints, by quickening of them by his ſpirit, Rom. ix. 11. And he continues it unto them, by the ſupplies of living grace, which he communicates unto them. From theſe two, his quickening of us, and continually giving out ſupplies of life unto us, he is ſaid to live in us, "I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me," Gal. ii. 20. The ſpiritual life which I have is not mine own, not from myſelf was it educed, not by myſelf is it maintained, but it is merely and ſolely the work of Chriſt; ſo that it is not I, that live, but, he lives in me, the whole of my life being from him alone. Neither doth this living head communicate only a bare life unto believers, that they ſhould merely live, and no more; a poor, weak, dying life, as it were, but he gives out ſufficiently to afford them a ſtrong, vigorous, thriving, flouriſhing life. He comes, not only that his ſheep may have life, but that "they may have it more abundantly," John x. 10. that is, in a plentiful manner, ſo as that they may flouriſh, be fat and fruitful. Thus it is with the whole body of Chriſt, and every member thereof, "whereby it grows up into him in all things, which is the head even Chriſt; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body, unto the edifying of itſelf in love," Epheſ. iv. 15, 16. The end of all communications of grace, and ſupplies of life from this living head, is the increaſe of the whole body, and every member of it, and the edifying of itſelf in love. His treaſures of grace are un-

ſearchable, his ſtores inexhauſtable. His life, the fountain of ours, full and eternal; his heart, bounteous and large, his hand open and liberal; ſo that there is no doubt but that he communicates ſupplies of grace, for their increaſe in holineſs, abundantly unto all his ſaints. Whence, then, is it that they do not all flouriſh and thrive exceedlingly? As you may ſee it oftentimes in a natural body, ſo it is here. Though the ſeat and riſe of the blood and ſpirits in the head and heart be exceedingly good and ſound, yet there may be a withering member in the body; ſomewhat intercepts the influences of life unto it. So that though the heart and head do perform their office, in giving of ſupplies no leſs to that, than they do to any other member; yet all the effect produced, is merely to keep it from utterly periſhing; it grows weak and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Chriſt's myſtical body, is not for want of his communication of grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interpoſition and oppoſition of indwelling ſin. Hence it is that where luſt grows ſtrong, a great deal of grace will but keep the ſoul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulneſs at all. Oftentimes Chriſt gives very much grace, where not many of its effects do appear. It ſpends its ſtrength, and power, in withſtanding the continual aſſaults of violent corruptions and luſts, ſo that it cannot put forth its proper virtue towards farther fruitfulneſs. As a virtuous medicine that is fit to check vicious and noxious humours, and to comfort, refreſh, and ſtrengthen nature; if the evil humour be ſtrong and greatly prevailing, ſpends its whole ſtrength and virtue in the ſubduing and correcting of it, contributing much leſs to the re-

lief of nature than otherwiſe it would do, if it met not with ſuch oppoſitions: ſo it is with the eye-ſalve, and the healing grace, which we have abundantly from the wings of the ſun of righteouſneſs. It is forced oftentimes, to put forth its virtue to oppoſe and contend againſt, and in any meaſure ſubdue prevailing luſts and corruptions: that the ſoul receiveth not that ſtrengthening unto duties and fruitfulneſs which otherwiſe it might receive by it, is from hence. How ſound, healthy, and flouriſhing, how fruitful and exemplary in holineſs, might many a ſoul be, by and with that grace, which is continually communicated to it from Chriſt, which now, by reaſon of the power of indwelling ſin, is not only dead, but weak, withering and uſeleſs. And this, if any thing, is a notable evidence of the efficacy of indwelling ſin, that it is able to give ſuch a ſtop, and check to the mighty and effectual powers of grace, ſo that notwithſtanding the bleſſed and continual ſupplies that we receive from our head, yet many believers do decline and decay, and that habitually, as to what they had attained unto; their laſt ways not anſwering their firſt. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth ſo many wild grapes, This makes ſo many trees barren in fertile fields.

Fourthly, Beſides the continual ſupplies of grace that conſtantly, according to the tenor of the covenant, are communicated unto believers, which keep them that they thirſt no more, as to a total indigence; there is, moreover a readineſs in the Lord Chriſt, to yield peculiar ſuccour to the ſouls of his, according as their occaſions ſhall require. The apoſtle tells us, that he is "a merciful high-prieſt, and able, (that is ready prepared and willing) to ſuccour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18. And we are, on that ac-

count, invited to "come with boldneſs to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" that is, grace ſufficient, ſeaſonable, ſuitable unto any ſpecial trial or temptation that we may be exerciſed withal. Our merciful high-prieſt is ready to give out this eſpecial ſeaſonable grace, over and above thoſe conſtant communications of ſupplies of the Spirit, which we mentioned before. Beſides the never failing ſprings of ordinary covenant-grace, he hath alſo peculiar refreſhing ſhowers, for times of drought. And this is exceedingly to the advantage of the ſaints, for their preſervation and growth in grace; and there may very many more of the like nature be added. But now I ſay, notwithſtanding all theſe, and the reſidue of the like importance, ſuch is the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin, ſo great its deceitfulneſs and reſtleſſneſs, ſo many its wiles and temptations, it often falls out that many of them, for whoſe growth and improvement all this proviſion is made, do yet as was ſhewed, go back and decline, even as to their courſe of walking with God. Samſon's ſtrength fully evidenced itſelf, when he brake ſeven new withs, and ſeven new cords, wherewith he was bound, as burning tow, and as thread. The noxious humour in the body, which is ſo ſtubborn, as that no uſe of the moſt ſovereign remedies can prevail againſt it, ought to be regarded. Such is this indwelling ſin, if not watched over: it breaks all the cords made to bind it; it blunts the inſtruments appointed to root it up; it reſiſts all healing medicines, though never ſo ſovereign; and is, therefore, aſſuredly, of exceeding efficacy. Beſides, believers have innumerable obligations upon them, from the love, the command of God, to "grow in grace," to preſs forward towards perfection, as they have abundant means provid-

ed for them ſo to do. Their doing ſo, is a matter of the greateſt advantage, profit, ſweetneſs, contentment unto them in the world; it is the burden, the trouble of their ſouls, that they do not ſo do; that they are not more holy, more zealous, uſeful, fruitful; they deſire it above life itſelf; they know it is their duty to watch againſt this enemy, to fight againſt it, to pray againſt it, and ſo they do. They more deſire its deſtruction, than the enjoyment of all this world, and all that it can afford. And yet, notwithſtanding all this, ſuch is the ſubtilty, and fraud, and violence, and fury, and urgency, and importunity, of this adverſary, that it frequently prevails to bring them into the woful condition mentioned. Hence it is with believers ſometimes, as it is with men in ſome places at ſea: They, have a good and fair gale of wind, it may be, all night long; they ply their tackling, attend their buſineſs diligently, and, it may be, take great delight to conſider how they proceed in their voyage: in the morning, or after a ſeaſon, coming to meaſure what way they have made, and what progreſs they have had, they find that they are much backward of what they were, inſtead of getting one ſtep forward; falling into a ſwift tide, or current, againſt them, it hath fruſtrated all their labours, and rendered the wind in their ſails almoſt uſeleſs; ſomewhat, thereby, they have borne up againſt the ſtream, but have made no progreſs. So it is with believers: they have a good gale of ſupplies from the Spirit above, they attend duties diligently, pray conſtantly, hear attentively, and omit nothing that may carry them on in their voyage towards eternity; but after a while coming ſeriouſly to conſider, by the examination of their hearts and ways, what progreſs they have made, they find that all their aſſiſtance and duties have not been able to bear them up

againſt ſome ſtrong tide or current of indwelling ſin. It hath kept them, indeed, that they have not been driven, and ſplit on rocks and ſhelves: it hath preſerved them from groſs, ſcandalous ſins, but yet they have loſt in their ſpiritual frame, or gone backwards, and are entangled under many woful decays: which is a notable evidence of the life of ſin, about which we are treating. Now, becauſe the end of our diſcovering this power of ſin is, that we may be careful to obviate and prevent it, in its operation; and becauſe, of all the effects it produceth, there is none more dangerous, or pernicious than that we have laſt inſiſted on, namely, that it prevails upon many profeſſors, unto an habitual declenſion from their former ways and attainments, notwithſtanding all the ſweetneſs and excellency which their ſouls have found in them: I ſhall, as was ſaid, in the next place conſider, by what ways and means, and through what aſſiſtance, it uſually prevails, in this kind, that we may the better be inſtructed to watch againſt it.

CHAP. XV.

Decays in degrees of grace cauſed by indwelling ſin, The ways of it's, prevalency to this purpoſe.

THE ways and means whereby indwelling ſin prevaileth on believers unto habitual declenſions and decays, as to degrees of grace and holineſs, is that which now comes under our conſideration, and are many.

Firſt, Upon the firſt converſion and calling of ſinners unto GOD and CHRIST, they have uſually many freſh ſprings breaking forth in their ſouls, and refreſhing ſhowers coming upon them, which bear them up to an high rate of faith, love, holineſs, fruitfulneſs and obedience. As upon a land-flood, when many leſſer ſtreams run into a river, it ſwells over its bounds, and rolls on with a more than ordinary fulneſs. Now if theſe ſprings be not kept open, if they prevail not for the continuance of theſe ſhowers, they muſt needs decay and go backwards. We ſhall name one or two of them.

Firſt, They have a freſh, vigorours ſenſe of pardoning mercy. According as this is in the ſoul, ſo will its love and delight in God, ſo will its obedience be. As, I ſay, is the ſenſe of goſpel-pardon, ſo will be the life of goſpel-love. "I ſay unto thee," ſaith our Saviour, of the poor woman, "her ſins which were many, are forgiven, for ſhe loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little," Luke vii. 47. Her great love was an evidence of great forgiveneſs, and her great ſenſe of it. For our Saviour is not rendering a reaſon of her forgiveneſs, as though it were for her love; but of her love, that it was becauſe of her forgiveneſs. Having, in the foregoing parable, from ver. 38. and onward, convinced the Phariſees, with whom he had to do, that he to whom moſt was forgiven would love moſt, as ver. 43, he thence gives an account of the great love of the woman, ſpringing from the ſenſe ſhe had of the great forgiveneſs which ſhe had ſo freely received. Thus ſinners, at their firſt converſion, are very ſenſible of great forgiveneſs: "Of whom I am chief," lies next their heart. This greatly ſubdues their hearts and ſpirits unto God in all, and quickens them unto all obedience;

even that such poor cursed sinners as they were, should so freely be delivered and pardoned. The love of God and of Christ, in their forgiveness, highly conquers and constrains them to make it their business to live unto God.

Secondly, The fresh taste they have had of spiritual things, keeps up such a savour and relish of them in their souls, as that worldly contentments, whereby men are drawn off from close walking with God, are rendered sapless and undesirable unto them. Having tasted of the wine of the gospel, they desire no other, for they say, This is best. So was it with the apostles, upon that option offered them, as to a departure from Christ, upon the apostacy of many false professors: "Will ye go away also?" They answer, by Peter, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life?" John vi. 67, 68. They had such a fresh savour, and relish of the doctrine, of the gospel, and the grace of Christ upon their souls, that they could entertain no thoughts of declining from it. As a man that hath been long kept in a dungeon, if brought forth on a sudden into the light of the sun, finds so much pleasure and contentment in it, in the beauties of the old creation, that he thinks he can never be weary of it, nor shall ever be contented, on any account, to be under darkness again. So it is with souls, when first translated into the marvellous light of Christ, to behold the beauties of the new creation. They see a new glory in him that hath quite sullied the desireableness of all earthly diversions. And they see a new guilt and filth in sin, that gives them an utter abhorrency of its old delights and pleasures; and so of other things.

Now, whilst these and the like springs are kept open in the souls of converted sinners, they con-

ſtrain them to a vigorous active holineſs. They can never do enough for God; ſo that, oftentimes, their zeal, as ſaints, ſuffers them not to eſcape without ſome blots on their prudence, as men: as might be inſtanced in many of the martyrs of old.

This, then, is the firſt, at leaſt one way, whereby indwelling ſin prepares men for decays and declenſions in grace and obedience: it endeavours to ſtop or taint theſe ſprings. And there are ſeveral ways whereby it bringeth this to paſs.

Firſt, It works by ſloth and negligence. It prevails in the ſoul, to a neglect of ſtirring up continual thoughs of, or about, the things that ſo powerfully influence it unto ſtrict and fruitful obedience. If care be not taken, if diligence and watchfulneſs be not uſed, and all means obſerved, which are appointed of God, to keep a quick and living ſenſe of them upon the ſoul, they will dry up and decay, and, conſequently, that obedience that ſhould ſpring from them, will do ſo alſo. Iſaac digged wells, but the Philiſtines ſtopped them, and his flocks had no benefit by them. Let the heart never ſo little diſuſe itſelf to gracious, ſoul-affecting thoughts of the love of God, the croſs of Chriſt, the greatneſs and excellency of goſpel-mercy, the beauties of holineſs: they will quickly be as much eſtranged to a man, as he can be to them. He that ſhuts his eyes, for a ſeaſon, in the ſun, when he opens them again, can ſee nothing at all. And, ſo much as a man loſeth of faith towards theſe things, ſo much will they loſe of power towards him. They can do little or nothing upon him, becauſe of his unbelief, which formerly were ſo exceedingly effectual towards him. So it was with the ſpouſe in the Canticles, chap. v. 2. Chriſt calls unto her, ver. 1. with a marvellous loving and gracious invitation, unto

communion with himself. She, who had formerly been ravished at the first hearing of that joyful sound, being now under the power of sloth and carnal ease, returns a sorry excusing answer to his call, which ended in her own signal loss and sorrow. Indwelling sin, I say, prevailing by spiritual sloth upon the souls of men, unto an inadvertency of the motions of God's Spirit, in their former apprehensions of divine love, and a negligence of stirring up continual thoughts of faith about it, a decay grows insensibly upon the whole soul. Thus God often complains, that his people had forgotten him, that is, grown unmindful of his love and grace, which was the beginning of their apostacy.

Secondly, By unframing the soul, so that it shall have formal, weary, powerless thoughts of those things which should prevail with it unto diligence, in thankful obedience. The apostle cautions us, that in dealing with God, we should use "reverence and godly fear," Heb. xii. 28, 29. because of his purity, holiness, and majesty. And this is that which the Lord himself spake, in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu. "I will be sanctified in them that come to me," Lev. x. 3. He will be dealt withal, in an awful, holy, reverent manner. So are we to deal with all the things of God, wherein, or whereby, we have communion with him. The soul is to have a great reverence of God in them. When men begin to take them into slight and common thoughts, not using and improving them unto the utmost, for the ends whereunto they are appointed, they lose all their beauty, and glory, and power towards them. When we have any thing to do, wherein faith or love towards God is to be exercised, we must do it with all our hearts, with all our minds, strength and souls, not slightly, and perfunctorily, which

God abhors; he doth not only require that we bear his love and grace in remembrance, but that as much as in us lieth, we do it according to the worth and excellency of them. It was the ſin of Hezekiah, that he "rendered not again according to the benefits done to him," 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. So, whilſt we conſider goſpel-truths, the uttermoſt endeavour of the ſoul ought to be, that we may be changed into the ſame image, or likeneſs, 2 Cor. iii. 18. that is, that they may have their full power and effect upon us. Otherwiſe James tells us what our "beholding the glory of the Lord in a glaſs," there mentioned by the apoſtle, is, that is reading, or hearing the mind of God in Chriſt, revealed in the goſpel, comes unto: "It is but like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glaſs, for he beholdeth himſelf and goeth away, and ſtraightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," James i. 23, 24. It makes no manner of impreſſion upon him, begets no idea nor image of his likeneſs in his imagination, becauſe he doth it only ſlightly, and with a tranſient look. So it is with men that will indeed think of goſpel truths, but in a ſlight manner, without endeavouring, with all their hearts, minds, and ſtrength, to have them engrafted upon the ſouls, and all the effects of them produced in them. Now this is the way of ſinners, in their firſt engagements unto God. They never think of pardoning mercy, but they labour to affect their whole ſouls with it, and do ſtir up themſelves unto ſuitable affections, and returns of conſtant obedience. They think not of the excellency of Chriſt, and ſpiritual things, now newly diſcovered unto them in a ſaving light, but they preſs, with all their might, after a farther and fuller enjoyment of them. This keeps them humble, and holy, this makes them thankful and fruitful. But now, if the ut-

moſt diligence and carefulneſs be not uſed, to improve and grow in this wiſdom, to keep up this frame, indwelling ſin, working by the vanity of the minds of men, will, inſenſibly bring them to content themſelves with ſlight and rare thoughts of theſe things, without a diligent, ſedulous endeavour to give them their due improvement upon the ſoul. As men decay herein, ſo they will aſſuredly decay, and decline, in the power of holineſs, and cloſe walking with God. The ſprings being ſtop, or tainted, the ſtreams will not run ſo ſwiftly, at leaſt not ſo ſweetly, as formerly. Some, by this means, under an uninterrupted profeſſion, inſenſibly wither almoſt into nothing. They talk of religion, and ſpiritual things, as much as ever they did in their lives, and perform duties with as much conſtancy, as ever they did, but yet have poor, lean, ſtarving ſouls, as to any real, and effectual communion with God. By the power and ſubtilty of indwelling ſin, they have grown formal, and learned to deal about ſpiritual things in an overly manner, whereby they have loſt all their life, vigour, ſavour, and efficacy towards them. Be always ſerious in ſpiritual things, if ever you intend to be bettered by them.

Thirdly, Indwelling ſin oftentimes prevails to the ſtopping of theſe ſprings of goſpel-obedience, by falſe and fooliſh opinions, corrupting the ſimplicity of the goſpel. Falſe opinions are the works of the fleſh. From the vanity and darkneſs of the minds of men, with a mixture, more or leſs, of corrupt affections, do they moſtly proceed. The apoſtle was jealous over his Corinthians in this matter: he was afraid, leſt their minds ſhould "by any means be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt," 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. which, he knew, would be attended by a decay and declenſion in faith, love, and obedience. And thus mat-

ters, in this caſe, often fall out. We have ſeen ſome, who, after they have received a ſweet taſte of the love of God in Chriſt, of the excellency of pardoning mercy, and have walked humbly with God, for many years, in the faith and apprehenſion of the truth, have, by the corruptions of their minds from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt, by falſe and fooliſh opinions, deſpiſed all their own experiences, and rejected all the efficacy of truth, as to the furtherance of their obedience. Hence John cautions the Elect Lady and her children, to take heed they were not ſeduced, "leſt they ſhould loſe the things that they had wrought," 2 John 8; leſt they ſhould themſelves caſt away all their obedience, as loſt, and a thing of no value. We have innumerable inſtances hereof in the days wherein we live. How many are there who, not many years ſince, put an unſpeakable value on the pardon of ſin in the blood of Chriſt, who delighted in goſpel-diſcoveries of ſpiritual things, and walked in obedience unto God, on the account of them; who, being beguiled, and turned aſide from the truth as it is in Jeſus, do deſpiſe theſe ſprings of their own former obedience. And as this is done groſly and openly in ſome, ſo there are more ſecret, and more plauſible inſinuations of corrupt opinions, tainting the ſprings and fountains of goſpel-obedience, and through the vanity of men's minds, which is a principal part of indwelling ſin getting ground upon them. Such are all thoſe that tend to the extenuation of ſpecial grace, in its freedom and efficacy, and the advancement of the wills, or the endeavours of men, in their ſpiritual power and ability: they are all works of the fleſh, and, howſoever ſome may pretend an uſefulneſs in them to the promotion of holineſs, they will be found to taint the ſprings of true evangelical obedience, inſen-

ſibly to turn the heart from God, and to bring the whole ſoul into a ſpiritual decay.

And this is one way, whereby indwelling ſin produceth this pernicious effect, of drawing men off from the power, the purity, and fruitfulneſs attending their firſt converſation, and engagements unto God, bringing them into habitual declenſion, at leaſt as unto degrees of their holineſs and grace. There is not any thing we ought to be more watchful againſt, if we intend effectually to deal with this powerful and ſubtile enemy. It is no ſmall part of the wiſdom of faith, to obſerve whatever goſpel-truths continue to have the ſame favour unto, and efficacy upon, the ſoul, as formerly they have had; and whether an endeavour be maintained to improve them continually as at the firſt. A commandment that is always practiſed, is always new, as John ſpeaks of that of love. And he that really improves goſpel-truths, though he hears them a thouſand times, they will be always new and freſh unto him, becauſe they put on newneſs of practice. When to another that grows common under them, they are burthenſome and common unto him; and he even loathes the manna that he is ſo accuſtomed unto.

Secondly, indwelling ſin doth this, by taking men off from their watch againſt the returns of ſatan. When the Lord Chriſt comes firſt to take poſſeſſion of any ſoul for himſelf, he binds that ſtrong man and ſpoils his goods; he deprives him of all his power, dominion and intereſt. Satan being thus diſpoſſeſt and fruſtrated in his hopes and expectations, leaves the ſoul, as finding it newly mortified to its baits. So he left our Saviour upon his fruitleſs attempts. But it is ſaid, "He left him only for a ſeaſon," Luke iv. 13. He intended to return again, as he ſhould ſee his advantage. So it is with believers alſo. Being

caſt out from his intereſt in them, he leaves them for a ſeaſon, at leaſt comparatively he doth ſo. Freed from his aſſaults and perplexing temptations, they proceed vigouroufly in the courſe of their obedience, and ſo flouriſh in the ways of God. But this holds not; ſatan returns again, and if the ſoul ſtands not continually upon his guard againſt him, he will quickly get ſuch advantages, as ſhall put a notable interruption upon his fruitfulneſs and obedience. Hence ſome, after they have ſpent ſome time, it may be ſome years, in chearful exemplary walking with God, have, upon ſatan's return, conſumed all their latter days in wreſtling with perplexing temptations, wherewith he hath entangled them. Others have plainly fallen under the power of his aſſaults. It is like a man, who having for a while lived uſefully amongſt his neighbours, done good, and communicated according to his ability, diſtributing to the poor, and helping all round about him, at length falling into the hands of vexatious, wrangling, oppreſſive men, he is forced to ſpend his whole time and revenue in defending himſelf againſt them at law, and ſo becomes uſeleſs in the place where he lives. So it is with many a believer; after he hath walked in a fruitful courſe of obedience to the glory of God, and edification of the church of Chriſt, being afreſh ſet upon by the return of ſatan in one way or other, he hath enough to do all the remainder of his life to keep himſelf alive; in the mean time, as to many graces, wofully decaying and going backward. Now this alſo, though ſatan hath an hand in it, is from indwelling ſin: I mean, the ſucceſs is ſo which ſatan doth obtain in his undertaking. This encourageth him, maketh way for his return, and gives entrance to his temptations. You know how it is with them, out of

whom he is caſt only by goſpel conviction; after he hath wandered and waited a while, he ſaith, He will return to his houſe from whence he was ejected. And what is the iſſue? Carnal luſts have prevailed over the mans convictions, and made his ſoul fit to entertain returning devils. It is ſo as to the meaſure of prevalency, that ſatan obtains againſt believers, upon advantages adminiſtered unto him, by ſins diſpoſing the ſoul unto an obnoxiouſneſs to his temptations.

Now the way and means whereby indwelling ſin doth give advantage to ſatan for his return, are all thoſe which diſpoſe them towards a declenſion which ſhall afterwards be mentioned. Satan is a diligent, watchful, and crafty adverſary, he will neglect no opportunity, no advantage that is offered unto him. Wherein then ſoever our ſpiritual ſtrength is impaired by ſin, or which way ſoever our luſts preſs, ſatan falls in with that weakneſs, and preſſeth towards that ruin. So that all the actings of the law of ſin are ſubſervient to this end of ſatan. I ſhall therefore only at preſent mention one or two, that ſeem principally to invite ſatan to attempt a return.

Firſt, It entangleth the ſoul in the things of the world, all which are ſo many purveyors for ſatan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after a while that they were entangled in the wilderneſs, and ſuppoſeth that he ſhall therefore now overtake them and deſtroy them. This ſtirs him up to purſue after them. Satan finding thoſe whom he hath been caſt out from entangled in the things of the world, by which he is ſure to find an eaſy acceſs unto them, is encouraged to attempt upon them afreſh; as the ſpider to come down upon the ſtrongeſt fly that is entangled in his web. For he comes, by his temptations, only to impel them unto that, whereunto,

by their own luſts, they are inclined, by adding poiſon to their luſts, and painting to the objects of them. And oftentimes by this advantage he gets ſo in upon the ſouls of men, that they are never well free of him more whilſt they live. And as men's diverſions increaſe from the world, ſo do their entanglements from ſatan. When they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they ſhall have more to do from ſatan than they can well withſtand. When men are made ſpiritually faint, by dealing in and with the world, ſatan ſets on them as Amaleck did on the faint and weak of the people that came out of Egypt.

Secondly, It produceth this effect by making the ſoul negligent, and taking it off from its watch. We have before ſhewed at large, that it is one main part of the effectual deceitfulneſs of indwelling ſin, to make the ſoul inadvertent, to turn it off from the diligent watchful attendance unto its duty which is required. Now there is not any thing in reference whereunto diligence and watchfulneſs is more ſtrictly enjoined, than the returning aſſaults of ſatan, "Be ſober, be vigilent;" and why ſo? "becauſe of your adverſary the devil," 1 Pet. v. 8. Unleſs you are exceeding watchful, at one time or other he will ſurpriſe you. And all the injunctions of our bleſſed Saviour, to watch, are ſtill with reference unto him and his temptations. Now when the ſoul is made careleſs and inadvertant, forgetting what an enemy it hath to deal withal, or is lifted up with the ſucceſſes it hath newly obtained againſt him, then is ſatan's time to attempt a re-entrnce of his old habitation; which if he cannot obtain, yet he makes their lives uncomfortable to themſelves, and unfruitful to others, in weakening their root, and withering their fruit, through his

poiſoning temptations. He comes down upon our duties of obedience, as the fowls upon Abraham's ſacrifice, that if we watch not, as he did, to drive them away, (for by reſiſtance he is overcome and put to flight) he will devour them.

Thirdly, indwelling ſin takes advantage to put forth its efficacy and deceit, to with-draw men from their primitive zeal and holineſs, from their firſt faith, love, and works, by the evil examples of profeſſors amongſt whom they live. When men firſt engage into the ways of God, they have a reverent eſteem of thoſe whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themſelves; theſe they love and honour, as it is their duty. But after a while, they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, crookedly, and not unlike the men of the world. Here ſin is not wanting to its advantage. Inſenſibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. This way, this courſe of walking, doth well enough with others, why may not it do ſo with us alſo? Such is the inward thought on many, that works effectually in them. And ſo, through the craft of ſin, the generation of profeſſors corrupt one another, As a ſtream ariſing from a clear ſpring or fountain, whilſt it runs in its own peculiar channel, and keeps its waters unmixed, preſerves its purity and cleanneſs; but when it falls, in its courſe, with other ſtreams, which are turbid and foul, though running the ſame way with it, it becomes muddy and diſcoloured alſo: ſo it is in this caſe. Believers come forth from the ſpring of the new birth with ſome purity and cleanneſs; this, for a while, they keep in the courſe of their private walking with God: but now, when they come ſometimes to fall into ſociety with others, whoſe profeſſion flows and runs the ſame way with theirs, even towards heaven, but yet are muddied

and ſullied with ſin and the world, they are often corrupted with them, and by them, and ſo decline from their firſt purity, faith, and holineſs. Now, leſt this may have been the caſe of any who ſhall read this diſcourſe, I ſhall add ſome few cautions, that are neceſſary to preſerve men from this infection.

Firſt, In the body of profeſſors there is a great number of hypocrites. Though we cannot ſay of this or that man, that he is ſo, yet that ſome there are is moſt certain. Our Saviour hath told us that it will be ſo to the end of the world. All that have oil in their lamps, have it not in their veſſels. Let men take heed how they give themſelves up unto a conformity to the profeſſors they met withal, leſt inſtead of ſaints, and the beſt of men, they ſometimes propoſe for their example hypocrites, which are the worſt, and when they think they are like unto them who bear the image of God, they conform themſelves unto thoſe who bear the image of ſatan.

Secondly, You know not what may be the preſent temptations of thoſe whoſe ways you obſerve. It may be they are under ſome peculiar deſertion from God, and ſo are withering for a ſeaſon, until he ſend them ſome refreſhing ſhowers from above. It may be they are entangled with ſome ſpecial corruptions, which is their burden that you know not of; and for any voluntarily to fall into ſuch a frame, as others are caſt into by the power of their temptations, or to think that will ſuffice in them, which they ſee to ſuffice in others whoſe diſtempers they know not, is folly and preſumption. He that knows ſuch or ſuch a perſon to be a living man, and of a healthy conſtitution, if he ſee him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble and weak, ſometimes falling, ſometimes ſtanding, and making ſmall progreſs in any

thing, will he think it ſufficient for himſelf to do ſo alſo? will he not inquire whether the perſon he ſees, have not lately fallen into ſome diſtemper or ſickneſs, that hath weakened him, and brought him into that condition? Aſſuredly he would do ſo. Take heed, chriſtians, many of the profeſſors with whom ye do converſe are ſick and wounded; the wounds of ſome of them do ſtink, and are corrupt becauſe of their folly. If you have any ſpiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much leſs think it will be well for you to become ſick and to be wounded alſo.

Thirdly, Remember that of many of the beſt chriſtians, the worſt only is known and ſeen. Many who keep up precious communion with God, do yet oftentimes by natural tempers of freedom or paſſion, not carry ſo glorious appearances as others, who perhaps come ſhort of them in grace and the power of godlineſs. In reſpect of their outward converſation it may ſeem they are ſcarcely ſaved, when in reſpect of their faith and love they may be eminent. They may, as the king's daughter, be all glorious within, though their cloaths be not always wrought gold. Take heed then that you be not infected with their worſt, when ye are not able it may be to imitate them in their beſt; but to return.

Fourthly, Sin doth this work by cheriſhing ſome ſecret particular luſt in the heart. This the ſoul contends againſt faintly. It contends againſt it upon the account of ſincerity, it cannot but do ſo; but it doth not make thorough-work, vigorouſly to mortify it by the ſtrength and power of grace. Now where it is thus with a ſoul, an habitual declenſion as to holineſs, will aſſuredly enſue. David ſhews us how in his firſt days he kept his heart cloſe unto God, "I was upright before

him, and I kept myſelf from mine iniquity," Pſal. xviii. 23. His great care was leſt any ſhould prevail in him or upon him, that might be called his iniquity in a peculiar manner. The ſame courſe ſteered Paul alſo, 1 Cor. ix. 27; he was in danger to be lifted up by his ſpiritual revelations and enjoyments: this makes him keep his body in ſubjection, that no carnal reaſoning nor vain imagination might take place in him. But where indwelling ſin hath provoked, irritated, and given ſtrength unto a ſpecial luſt, it proves aſſuredly a principal means of a general declenſion. For as an infirmity and weakneſs in any one vital part, will make the whole body conſumptive, ſo will the weakneſs in any one grace, which a perplexing luſt brings with it, make the ſoul. It every way weakens ſpiritual ſtrength. It weakens confidence in God in faith and prayer. The knees will be feeble, and the hands will hang down, in dealing with God, where a galling and unmortified luſt lies in the heart. It will take ſuch hold upon the ſoul, "that it ſhall not be able to look up," Pſal. xl. 12. It darkens the mind by innumerable fooliſh imaginations, which it ſtirs up to make proviſion for itſelf. It galls the conſcience with thoſe ſpots and ſtains, which in and by its actings it brings upon the ſoul. It contends in the will for rule and dominion: an active ſtirring corruption, would have the commanding power in the ſoul, and it is ever and anon ready to take the throne. It diſturbs the thoughts, and ſometimes will even frighten the ſoul from dealing with it by meditation, leſt corrupt affections being entangled by it, grace loſes ground inſtead of prevailing. It breaks out oftentimes into ſcandalous ſins, as it did in David and Hezekiah, and loads the ſinner with ſorrow and diſcouragement. By theſe and the like means it becomes to the ſoul

like a moth in a garment, to eat up and devour the ſtrongeſt threads of it, ſo that, though the whole hang looſe together, it is eaſily torn in pieces. Though the ſoul with whom it is thus, do for a ſeaſon keep up a fair profeſſion, yet his ſtrength is ſecretly devoured; and every temptation tears and rents his conſcience at pleaſure. It becomes with ſuch men as it is with ſome who have for many years been of a ſound, ſtrong, athletic conſtitution. Some ſecret, hectical diſtemper ſeizeth on them: for a ſeaſon they take no notice of it: or if they do, they think they ſhall do well enough with it, and eaſily ſhake it off when they have a little leiſure to attend unto it: but for the preſent they think as Sampſon with his locks cut, they will do as at other times. Sometimes it may be they complain that they are not well, they know not what aileth them, and it may riſe violently in an oppoſition to their diſtemper; but after a while ſtruggling in vain, the vigour of their ſpirits and ſtrength failing them, they are forced to yield to the power of a conſumption. And now all they can do, is little enough to keep them alive. It is ſo with men brought into ſpiritual decays by any ſecret, perplexing corruptions. It may be they have had a vigorous principle of obedience and holineſs: Indwelling ſin watching its opportunities, by ſome temptation or other, hath kindled and inflamed ſome particular luſt in them. For a while it may be they take little notice of it. Sometimes they complain, but think they will do as in former times, until being inſenſibly weakened in their ſpiritual ſtrength, they have work enough to do in keeping alive what remains, and is ready to die. I ſhall not add any thing here as to the prevention and obviating this advantage of indwelling ſin, having elſewhere treated of it peculiarly and apart.

Fifthly, It works by negligence of private communion with God in prayer and meditation. I have ſhewn before how indwelling ſin puts forth its deceitfulneſs in diverting the ſoul from watchfulneſs in and unto theſe duties. Here if it prevails, it will not fail to induce an habitual declenſion in the whole courſe of obedience. All neglect of private duties is principled by a wearineſs of God as he complaineth. "Thou haſt not called upon me, thou haſt been weary of me," Iſa. xliii. 22. Neglect of invocation proceeds from wearineſs. And where there is wearineſs there will be withdrawing from that whereof we are weary. Now God alone being the fountain and ſpring of ſpiritual life, if there be a wearineſs of him, and withdrawing from him, it is impoſſible but that there will a decay in the life enſue. Indeed what men are, in theſe duties, I mean as to faith and love in them, that they are and no more. Here lies the root of their obedience, and if this fails, all fruit will quickly fail. You may ſometimes ſee a tree flouriſhing with leaves and fruit goodly and pleaſant. After a while the leaves begin to decay, the fruit to wither, and the whole to droop. Search, and you ſhall find the root, whereby it ſhould draw in moiſture and fatneſs from the earth, to ſupply the body and branches with ſap and juice for growth and fruit, hath received a wound, is ſome way periſhed, and doth not perform its duty, ſo that, though the branches are flouriſhing a while with what they had received, their ſuſtenance being intercepted, they muſt decay. So it is here. Theſe duties of private communion with God, are the means of receiving ſupplies of ſpiritual ſtrength from him; of ſap and fatneſs from Chriſt, the vine and olive. Whilſt they do ſo, the converſation and courſe of obedience flou-

riſheth and is fruitful, all outward duties are chearfully and regularly performed. But if there be a wound, a defect, a failing in that which ſhould firſt take in the ſpiritual radical moiſture, that ſhould be communicated unto the whole, the reſt may for a ſeaſon maintain their ſtation and appearance, but after a while, profeſſion will wither, fruits will decay, and the whole will be ready to die. Hence our Saviour lets us know, Matt. vi. 6. what a man is in ſecret, in theſe private duties, that he is in the eyes of God, and no more. And one reaſon amongſt others is, becauſe they have a more vigorous acting of unmixed grace, than any other duties whatever. In all or moſt particular duties, beſides the influence that they may have from carnal reſpects, which are many, and the ways of their inſinuation ſubtile, and imperceptible, there is an alloy of gifts, which ſometimes even devours the pure gold of grace which ſhould be the chief and principal in them. In theſe, there is immediate intercourſe between God, and that which is of himſelf in the ſoul. If once ſin, by its deceits and treacheries, prevail to take off the ſoul from diligent attendance unto communion with God, and conſtancy in theſe duties, it will not fail to effect a declining in the whole of a man's obedience. It hath made its entrance, and will aſſuredly make good its progreſs.

Sixthly, Growing in notions of truth without anſwerable practice, is another thing that indwelling ſin makes uſe of to bring the ſouls of believers under a decay. The apoſtle tells us, that "knowledge puffeth up," 1 Cor. viii. 1. If it be alone, not improved in practice, it ſwells men beyond a due proportion. Like a man that hath a dropſy, we are not to expect that he hath ſtrength to his bigneſs. Like trees that are con-

tinually running up an head, which keeps them from bearing fruit. When once men have attained to this, that they can entertain and receive evangelical truths in a new and more glorious light, or more clear diſcovery than formerly, or new manifeſtations of truth which they knew not before, and pleaſe themſelves in ſo doing, without diligent endeavours to have the power of thoſe truths and notions upon their hearts, and their ſouls made conformable unto them, they generally learn ſo to diſpoſe of all truths formerly known, which were ſometimes inlaid in their hearts, with more efficacy and power. This hath proved, if not the ruin, yet the great impairing of many in theſe days of light, wherein we live. By this means, from humble cloſe walking, many have withered into an empty, barren, talking profeſſion. All things almoſt have, in a ſhort ſeaſon, become alike unto them: Have they been true or falſe, ſo they may be debating of them, and diſputing about them, all is well. This is food for ſin, it hatcheth, increaſeth it, and is increaſed by it. A notable way it is for the vanity that is in the mind, to exert itſelf without a rebuke from conſcience. Whilſt men are talking, and writing, and ſtudying about religion, and hearing preaching, it may be, with great delight, as thoſe in Ezekiel, chap. xxxiii. 32. Conſcience, unleſs thoroughly awake and circumſpect, and furniſhed with ſpiritual wiſdom and care, will be very well pacified, and enter no rebukes or pleas againſt the way that the ſoul is in. But yet all this may be nothing but the acting of that natural vanity which lies in the mind, and is a principal part of the ſin we treat of. And generally this is ſo, when men content themſelves, as was ſaid, with the notions of truth, without labouring after an experience of the power of them in their

hearts, and the bringing forth the fruit of them in their lives, on which a decay muſt needs enſue.

Seventhly, Growth in carnal wiſdom is another help to ſin in producing this ſad effect. "Thy wiſdom and thy knowledge," ſaith the prophet, "hath perverted thee," Iſai. xlvii. 10. So much as carnal wiſdom increaſeth, ſo much faith decays. The proper work of it is, to teach a man to truſt to and in himſelf; of faith to truſt wholly in another. So it labours to deſtroy the whole work of faith by cauſing the ſoul to return into a deceiving fulneſs of his own. We have woful examples of the prevalency of this principle of declenſion in the days wherein we live. How many a poor, humble, broken-hearted creature, who followed after God in ſimplicity and integrity of ſpirit, have we ſeen through the obſervation of the ways and walkings of others, and cloſing with the temptations to craft and ſubtilty, which opportunities in the world have adminiſtered unto them, come to be dipt into a worldly, carnal frame, and utterly to wither in their profeſſion. Many are ſo ſullied hereby, that they are not to be known to be the men they were.

Eighthly, Some great ſin lying long in the heart and conſcience unrepented of, or not repented of as it ought, and as the matter requires, furthers indwelling ſin in this work. The great turn of the life of David, whence his firſt ways carried the reputation, was in the harbouring his great ſin in his conſcience without ſuitable repentance. It was otherwiſe we know with Peter, and he had another iſſue. A great ſin will certainly give a great turn to the life of a profeſſor. If it be well cured in the blood of Chriſt, with that humiliation which the goſpel requires, it often proves a means of more watchfulneſs, fruit-

fulneſs, humility, and contentation, than ever the ſoul before obtained. If it be neglected, it certainly hardens the heart, weakens the ſpiritual ſtrength, enfeebles the ſoul, diſcouraging it unto all communion with God, and is a notable principle of a general decay. So David complains, "My wounds ſtink and are corrupt becauſe of my fooliſhneſs," Pſal. xxxviii. 5. His preſent diſtemper was not ſo much from his ſin, as his folly; not ſo much from the wounds he had received, as from his neglect to make a timely application for their cure. It is like a broken bone, which being well ſet, leaves the place ſtronger than before; if otherwiſe, makes the man a cripple all his days. Theſe things we do but briefly name, and ſundry other advantages of the like nature, that ſin makes uſe of to produce this effect, might alſo be inſtanced in; but theſe may ſuffice unto our preſent purpoſe. Whatever it uſeth, itſelf is ſtill the principle; and this is no ſmall demonſtration of its efficacy and power.

CHAP. XVI.

The ſtrength of indwelling ſin, manifeſted from its power and effects in perſons unregenerate.

IT is of the power and efficacy of indwelling ſin, as it remains, in ſeveral degrees in believers, that we are treating. Now I have elſewhere ſhewed, that the nature, and all the natural properties of it, do ſtill remain in them; though, therefore, we cannot prove directly what is the ſtrength of ſin in them, from what its pow-

er is in thoſe, in whom it is only checked, and not at all weakened; yet we may, from an obſervation thereof, caution believers of the real power of that mortal enemy, with whom they have to do.

If the plague do violently rage in one city, deſtroying multitudes, and there be, in another, an infection of the ſame kind, which yet ariſes not unto that height and fury there, by reaſon of the correction that it meets withal from a better air, and remedies uſed; yet a man may demonſtrate unto the inhabitants, the ſource and danger of that infection got in among them, by the effects that it hath and doth produce among others, who have not the benefit of the preventives and preſervatives which they enjoy; which will both teach them to value the means of their preſervation, and be the more watchful againſt the power of the infection that is amongſt them. It is ſo in this caſe. Believers may be taught what is the power and efficacy of that plague of ſin which is in and among them, by the effects the ſame plague produceth, in and among others, who have not thoſe corrections of its poiſon, and thoſe preſervatives from death, which the Lord Jeſus hath furniſhed them withal.

Having then fixed on the demonſtration of the power of ſin, from the effects it doth produce, and having given a double inſtance hereof in believers themſelves, I ſhall now farther evidence the ſame truth, or purſue the ſame evidence of it, by ſhewing ſomewhat of the power that it hath in them who are unregenerate, and ſo have not the remedies againſt it, with which believers are furniſhed.

I ſhall not handle the whole power of ſin in unregenerate perſons, which is a very large field, and not the buſineſs I have in hand; but only by

ſome few inſtances of its effects in them, intimate, as I ſaid, unto believers, what they have to deal withal.

Firſt then, It appears in the violence it offers to the nature of men, compelling them unto ſins, fully contrary to all the principles of the reaſonable nature wherewith they are endued from God. Every creature of God hath in its creation a law of operation implanted in it, which is the rule of all that proceedeth from it, of all that it doth of its own accord. So the fire aſcends upwards, bodies that are weighty and heavy deſcend; the water flows, each according to the principles of their nature, which give them the law of their operation. That which hinders hem in their operation, is force and violence, as that which hinders a ſtone from deſcending, or the fire from going upwards. That which forceth them to move contrary to the law of their nature, as, a ſtone to go upwards, or the fire to deſcend, is, in its kind, the greateſt violence, of which the degrees are endleſs. Now that which ſhould take a great millſtone, and fling it upwards into the air, all would acknowledge to be a matter of wondrous force, power, and efficacy.

Man alſo hath his law of operation and working, concreated with him. And this may be conſidered two ways; either, firſt, As it is common to him with other creatures; or, As peculiar, with reference unto that ſpecial end for which he was created. Some things are, I ſay, in this law of nature, common to man with other creatures; as to nouriſh their young, to live quietly with thoſe of the ſame kind and race with them; to ſeek and follow after that which is good for them in that ſtate and condition wherein they are created.

Theſe are things, which all brute living creatures have in the law of their nature, as man alſo hath.

But now, beſides theſe things, man being created in an eſpecial manner to give glory to God, by rational and moral obedience, and ſo to obtain reward in the enjoyment of him; there are many things in the law of his creation, that are peculiar to him; as to love God above all, to ſeek the enjoyment of him as his chiefeſt good, and laſt end, to enquire after his mind and will, and to yield obedience, and the like. All which are part of the law of his nature.

Now theſe things are not diſtinguiſhed ſo, as though a man might perform the actions of the law of his nature, which are common to him with other creatures, merely from the principles of his nature, as they do; but the law of his dependence upon God, and doing all things in obedience unto him, paſſeth on them all alſo. He can never be conſidered as a mere creature, but as a creature made for the glory of God, by rational moral obedience; rational, becauſe by him choſen, and performed with reaſon; and moral, becauſe regulated by a law whereunto reaſon doth attend.

For inſtance, It is common to man, with other creatures, to take care for the nouriſhing of his children, of the young helpleſs ones, that receive their being by him. There is implanted in him, in the principles of his nature, concreated with them, a love and care for them; ſo it is with other living creatures. Now let other creatures anſwer this inſtinct and inclination, and be not hardened againſt them like the fooliſh oſtrich, unto whom God hath not imparted his natural wiſdom, Job xxxix. 16, 17. they fully anſwer the law of their creation. With man it is not ſo; it is not enough for him to anſwer the inſtinct and ſecret

impulſe and inclination of his nature and kind, as in the nouriſhing of his children; but he muſt do it alſo in ſubjection to God, and obey him therein, and do it unto his glory: the law of moral obedience paſſing over all his whole being, and all his operations; but in theſe things lie, as it were, the whole of a man, namely, in the things which are implanted in his nature as a creature, common to him with all other living creatures, ſeconded by the command or will of God, as he is a creature capable of yielding moral obedience, and doing all things for his glory.

That then, which ſhall drive and compel a man to tranſgreſs this law of his nature, which is not only as to throw milſtones upwards, or to drive beaſts from taking care of their young, to take from cattle of the ſame kind the herding of themſelves in quietneſs, but moreover, to caſt off what lies in him, his fundamental dependance on God, as a creature made to yield him obedience, muſt needs be eſteemed of great force and efficacy.

Now this is frequently done by indwelling ſin, in perſons unregenerate. Let us take ſome few inſtances.

Firſt, there is nothing that is more deeply inlaid in the principles of the natures of all living creatures, and ſo of man himſelf, than a love unto, and a care for, the preſervation and nouriſhing of their young: many brute creatures will die for them, ſome feed them with their own fleſh and blood; all deprive themſelves of that food which nature directs them to as their beſt, to impart it to them; and acting in their behalf to the utmoſt of their power.

Now ſuch is the efficacy, power, and force of indwelling ſin in man, an infection that the nature of other creatures knows nothing of, that in many it prevails to ſtop this fountain, to beat back

the ſtream of natural affections, to root up the principles of the law of nature, and to drive them unto a neglect, a deſtruction of the fruit of their own loins. Paul tells us of the old Gentiles, that they were "without natural affection," Rom. 1. 31; that which he aims at is that barbarous cuſtom among the Romans, who oftimes, to ſpare the trouble in the education of their children, and to be at liberty to ſatisfy their luſts, deſtroyed their own children from the womb. So far did the ſtrength of ſin prevail to obliterate the law of nature, and to repel the force and power of it.

Examples of this nature are common in all nations; amongſt ourſelves, of women murdering their own children, through the deceitful reaſoning of ſin. And herein ſin turns the ſtrong current of nature, darkens all the light of God in the ſoul, controuls all natural principles, influenced with the power of the command and will of God. But yet this evil hath, through the efficacy of ſin, received a fearful aggravation. Men have not only ſlain, but cruelly ſacrificed their children to ſatisfy their luſts. The apoſtle reckons idolatry, and ſo conſequently all ſuperſtition, among the works of the fleſh, Gal. v. 20. that is, the fruit and product of indwelling ſin. Now from hence it is that men have offered that horrid and unſpeakable violence to the law of nature mentioned. So the Pſalmiſt tells us, Pſal. cvi. 37, 38. The ſame is again mentioned, in ſundry other places of ſcripture. The whole manner of that abomination I have elſewhere declared. For the preſent it may ſuffice to intimate, that they took their children and burnt them to aſhes in a ſoft fire; the wicked prieſts that aſſiſted in the ſacrifice affording them this relief, that they made a noiſe and clamour, that the vile wretches might

not hear the woful moans and cries of the poor dying tormented infants. I ſuppoſe in this caſe we need no farther evidence. Naturaliſts can give no rational account, they can only admire the ſecret force of that little fiſh, which, they ſay, will ſtop a ſhip in full ſail in the midſt of the ſea. And we muſt acknowledge, that it is beyond our power to give an account of the ſecret force, and unſearchable deceit, that is in this inbred traitor ſin, that cannot only ſtop the courſe of nature, when all the ſails of it that carry it forward are ſo filled, as they are, in that of affections to children, but alſo drive it backward with ſuch a violence and force, as to cauſe men ſo to deal with their own children, as a good man would not be hired with any reward to deal with his dog. And it may not be to the diſadvantage of the beſt, to know and conſider, that they carry that about them, and in them, which in others hath produced theſe effects.

The like may be ſpoken of all other ſins againſt the prime dictates of the law of nature, that mankind is, or hath been ſtained and defamed withal. Murder of parents and children, of wives and huſbands. Sodomy, inceſt, and the like enormities; in all which ſin prevails in men againſt the whole law of their being and dependence upon God.

Why ſhould I reckon up the murders of Cain and Abel, the treaſon of Judas, with their aggravations; or remind the filth and villany of Nero, in whom ſin ſeemed to deſign an inſtance of what it could debaſe the nature of man unto? In a word, all the ſtudied, premeditated perjuries; all the deſigned, bloody revenges; all the filth and uncleanneſs; all the enmity to God and his ways that is in the world, is fruit growing from this root alone.

Secondly, It evidences its efficacy in keeping men off from believing under the diſpenſation of the goſpel. This evidence muſt be a little further cleared.

Firſt, Under the diſpenſation of the goſpel, there are but few that do believe. So the preachers of it complain, "Who hath believed our report," Iſa. liii. 1. which the apoſtle interprets of the paucity of believers, John xii. 38. Our Saviour Chriſt himſelf tells us, that "many are called;" the word is preached unto many, "but few are choſen." And ſo the church complains of its number. Mic. vi. 1. Few there be who enter the narrow gate, daily experience confirms this woful obſervation. How many villages, pariſhes, yea towns, may we go unto, where the goſpel, it may be, hath been preached many years, and perhaps ſcarce meet a true believer in them, and one who ſhews forth the death of Chriſt in his converſation. In the beſt places and moſt eminent for profeſſion, are not ſuch perſons like the berries after the ſhaking of an olive-tree, two or three in the top of the upmoſt boughs, and four or five in the higheſt branches?

Secondly, There is propoſed to men in the preaching of the goſpel, as motives unto believing, every thing in conjunction, that ſeverally prevail with men to do whatever elſe they do in their lives. Whatever any one doth with conſideration, he doth it either becauſe it is reaſonable and good for him ſo to do; or profitable and advantageous; or pleaſant, or, laſtly, neceſſary for the avoidance of evil; whatever, I ſay, men do with conſideration, whether it be good or evil; whether it be in the works of this life, or in things that lead to another; they do it from one or other of the reaſons or motives mentioned. And God knows, oft-times they are very poor and

mean in their kind that men are prevailed upon by. How often will men for a very little pleaſure, a very little profit, be induced to do that which ſhall imbitter their lives and damn their ſouls. And what induſtry will they uſe to avoid that which they apprehend evil or grievous to them? And any one of theſe is enough to oil the wheels of men's utmoſt endeavours, and ſet men at work to the purpoſe.

But now all theſe things centre in the propoſal of the goſpel, and the command of believing; and every one of them in a kind, that the whole world can propoſe nothing like unto it.

It is the moſt reaſonable thing that can be propoſed to the underſtanding of a man; that he who, through his own default, hath loſt that way of bringing glory to God, and ſaving his own ſoul, (for which ends he was made) that he was firſt placed in, ſhould accept of, and embrace, that other bleſſed, eaſy, ſafe, excellent way, for the attaining of the ends mentioned, which God in infinite grace, love, mercy, wiſdom, and righteouſneſs hath found out, and doth purpoſe unto him. And,

Secondly, It is the profitableſt thing that a man can poſſibly be invited unto; if there be any profit, or benefit, any advantage in the forgiveneſs of ſins, in the love and favour of God, in a bleſſed immortality, in eternal glory. And,

Thirdly, It is moſt pleaſant alſo; ſurely it is a pleaſant thing to be brought out of darkneſs into light, out of a dungeon unto a throne, from captivity and ſlavery to ſatan and curſed luſts, to the glorious liberty of the children of God, with a thouſand heavenly ſweetneſſes not now to be mentioned. And,

Fourthly, It is ſurely neceſſary, and that not only from the command of God, who hath the ſu-

preme authority over us, but alſo indiſpenſibly ſo for the avoidance of eternal ruin of body and ſoul, Mar. xvi. 16. It is conſtantly propoſed under theſe terms, believe, or you periſh under the weight of the wrath of the great God, and that for evermore.

But now, notwithſtanding that all theſe conſiderations are preached unto men, and preſſed upon them in the name of the great God, from day to day, from one year to another, yet, as was before obſerved, very few there are who ſet their hearts unto them, ſo as to embrace that which they lead unto. Tell men ten thouſand times, that this is wiſdom, yea, riches, that all their profit lies in it, that they will aſſuredly and eternally periſh, and that they may be within a few hours, if they receive not the goſpel; aſſure them that it is their only intereſt and concernment; let them know that God himſelf ſpeaks all this unto them; yet all is one, they regard it not, ſet not their hearts unto it; but, as it were, plainly ſay, we will have nothing to do with theſe things: they will rather periſh in their luſts than accept of mercy.

Thirdly, It is indwelling ſin that both diſenableth men unto, and hinders them from, believing, and that alone. Blindneſs of mind, ſtubbornneſs of the will, ſenſuality of the affections, all concur to keep poor periſhing ſouls at a diſtance from Chriſt. Men are made blind by ſin, and cannot ſee his excellencies; obſtinate, and will not lay hold of his righteouſneſs; ſenſeleſs, and take no notice of their own eternal concernments.

Now, certainly that which can prevail with men, wiſe and ſober, and prudent in other things, to neglect and deſpiſe the love of God, the blood of Chriſt, the eternal welfare of their own ſouls,

upon weak and worthleſs pretences, muſt be acknowledged to have an aſtoniſhable force and efficacy accompanying it.

Whoſe heart, who hath once heard of the ways of God, can but bleed to ſee poor ſouls eternally periſhing under a thouſand gracious invitations, to accept of mercy and pardon in the blood of Chriſt? And can we but be aſtoniſhed at the power of that principle from whence it is, that they run headlong to their own deſtruction? And yet all this befals them from the power and deceit of ſin that dwelleth in them.

3. It is evident in their total apoſtaſies. Many men not really converted, are much wrought upon by the word. The apoſtle tells us, that they do "clean eſcape them that live in error," 2 Pet. ii. 18. They ſeparate themſelves from idolatry and falſe worſhip, owning and profeſſing the truth, and they alſo eſcape "the pollutions of the world," ver. 20; that is, "the corruption that is in the world through luſt," as he expreſſeth it, chap. i. 4. thoſe filthy corrupt and unclean ways, which the men of the world, in the purſuit of their luſts, do walk and live in; theſe they eſcape from, in the amendment of their lives, and ordering of their converſation according to the convictions which they have from the word. For ſo he tells us, that all this is brought about, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; that is, by the preaching of the goſpel; they are ſo far wrought upon, as to forſake all ways of falſe worſhip, to profeſs the truth, to reform their lives, and to walk anſwerable to the convictions that are upon them.

By this means do they gain the reputation of profeſſors, "They have a name to live," Rev. iii. 1; and are made partakers of ſome, or all

of thoſe privileges of the goſpel, that are numbered by the apoſtle, Heb. vi. 4, 5.

It is not my preſent buſineſs to ſhew how far, or wherein a man may be effectually wrought upon by the word, and yet not be really wrought over to cloſe with Chriſt; or what may be the utmoſt bounds and limits of a common work of grace upon unregenerate men; it is on all hands confeſſed, that it may be carried on ſo far, that it is very difficult to diſcern between its effects and productions, and thoſe of that grace which is ſpecial and ſaving.

But now, notwithſtanding all this, we ſee many of theſe daily fall off from God, utterly and wickedly; ſome into debauchery and uncleanneſs, ſome to worldlineſs and covetouſneſs, ſome to be perſecutors of the ſaints, all to the perdition of their own ſouls. How this comes about, the apoſtle declares in that place mentioned; they are, ſaith he, entangled again; to entice and entangle as I have ſhewed before, from James i. 14, 15. is the proper work of indwelling ſin; it is that alone which entangles the ſoul; as the apoſtle ſpeaks, ver. 18. They are allured from their whole profeſſion, into curſed apoſtacy, the luſts of the fleſh.

It prevails upon them through its deceit and power to an utter relinquiſhment of their profeſſion; and their whole engagement unto God: and this ſeveral ways evinces the greatneſs of its ſtrength and efficacy.

1. In that it giveth ſtop or controul unto that exceeding greatneſs of power, which is put forth in the word, in their conviction and reformation. We ſee it by experience, that men are not eaſily wrought upon by the word; the moſt of men can live under the diſpenſation of it, all the days of their lives, and continue as ſenſeleſs and ſtupid

as the ſeats they ſit upon, or the flint in the rock of ſtone. Mighty difficulties and prejudices muſt be conquered, great ſtrokes muſt be given to the conſcience, before this can be brought about. It is as the ſtopping of a river in his courſe, and turning his ſtreams another way; the hindering of a ſtone in its falling downwards, or the turning away of the wild aſs, when furiouſly ſet to purſue his way, as the prophet ſpeaks, Jer. ii. 24; to turn men from their corrupt ways, ſins, and pleaſures; to make them faſt, pray, hear, and do many things contrary to the principle of fleſh, which is ſecretly predominant in them, willingly and gladly; to cauſe them to profeſs Chriſt and the goſpel, it may be under ſome trials and reproaches; to give them light, to ſee into ſundry myſteries and gifts, for the diſcharge of ſundry duties; to make dead, blind, ſenſeleſs men, to walk, and talk, and do all the outward offices and duties of living and healthy men; with the like attendances of conviction and reformation, are the effects and products of mighty power and ſtrength. Indeed the power that the Holy Ghoſt puts forth by the word, in the ſtaggering and conviction of ſinners, in the awakening of their conſciences, the enlightening of their minds, the changing of their affections, the awing of their hearts, the reforming of their lives, and compelling them to duties, is inexpreſſible.

But now, unto all theſe is there check and controul given by indwelling ſin. It prevails againſt this whole work of the Spirit, by the word, with all the advantages of providential diſpenſations, in afflictions, and mercies, wherewith it is attended. When ſin is once enraged, all things become but like the withs and cords wherewith Sampſon was bound, before his head was ſhaven: cry but to it, the Philiſtines are upon thee; here is a ſub-

tile, a ſuitable temptation, now ſhew thy ſtrength and efficacy; all theſe become like tow that has ſmelt the fire. Conſcience is ſtifled, reputation in the church of God deſpiſed, light ſupplanted, the impreſſions of the word caſt off, convictions digeſted, heaven and hell are deſpiſed; ſin makes its way through all, and utterly turns the ſoul from the good and right ways of God. Sometimes it doth this ſubtilely, by imperceptible degrees, taking off all force of former impreſſions from the Spirit, by the word; ſullying conſcience by degrees, hardening the heart, and making ſenſual the affections, by various workings, that the poor backſlider in heart ſcarce knows what he is doing, until he be come to the very bottom of all impiety, profaneneſs, and enmity againſt God. Sometimes falling in conjunction with ſome vigorous temptation, it ſuddenly, and at once, plunges the ſoul into a courſe of alienation from God, and the profeſſion of his ways.

2. It takes them off from thoſe hopes of heaven, which upon their convictions, obedience, and temporary faith, or believing, they had obtained. There is a general hope of heaven, or, at leaſt, of the eſcaping of hell, of an untroubleſome immortality, in the moſt ſottiſh and ſtupid ſouls in the world, who, either by tradition, or inſtruction from the word, are perſuaded that there is another ſtate of things to come after this life; but it is in unconvinced, unenlightened perſons, a dull, ſenſeleſs, unaffecting thing, that hath no other hold upon them, nor power in them, but only to keep them free from the trouble and perplexity of contrary thoughts and apprehenſions. The matter is otherwiſe with them who, by the word, are ſo wrought upon as we have before declared; their hope of heaven, and bleſſed immortality, is oft-times accompanied with great joys, and exultati-

ons, and is a relief unto them, under and againſt the worſt of their fears and trials; it is ſuch as they would not part with for all the world; and upon all occaſions they retreat in their minds unto it, for comfort and relief.

Now all this by the power of ſin are they prevailed withal to forego. Let heaven go if it will, a bleſſed immortality with the enjoyment of God himſelf, ſin muſt be be ſerved, and proviſion made to fulfil the luſts thereof.

If a man, in the things of this world, had ſuch a hope of a large inheritance, of a kingdom, as wherein he is ſatisfied that it will not fail him, but that, in the iſſue he ſhall ſurely enjoy it, and lead an happy and a glorious life in the poſſeſſion of it many days; if one ſhould go to him, and tell him, it is true, the kingdom you look for, is an ample and honourable dominion, full of all good things deſirable, and you may attain it; but come, caſt away all hopes and expectations of it, and come join with me in the ſervice and ſlavery of ſuch or ſuch an oppreſſive tyrant. You will eaſily grant, he muſt have ſome ſtrange bewitching power with him, that ſhould prevail with a man in his wits to follow his advice.

Yet thus it is, and much more ſo, in the caſe we have in hand. Sin itſelf cannot deny, but that the kingdom of heaven, which the ſoul is in hope and expectation of, is glorious and excellent: nor doth it go about to convince him, that his thoughts of it are vain, and ſuch as will deceive him; but plainly prevails with him to caſt away his hopes, to deſpiſe his kingdom, that he was in expectation of, and that upon no other motive, but that he may ſerve ſome worldly, cruel, or filthy and ſenſual luſt. Certainly, here lies a ſecret efficacy, whoſe depth cannot be fathomed.

3. The apoſtle manifeſts the power of the entanglements of ſin in and upon apoſtates, in that it turns them off from "the way of righteouſneſs after they have known it;" 2 Pet. ii. 21. It will be found at the laſt day an evil thing and a bitter, that men live all their days in the ſervice of ſin, ſelf, and the world, refuſing to make any trial of the ways of God, whereunto they are invited; though they have no experience of their excellency, beauty, pleaſantneſs, ſafety; yet having evidence brought unto them from God himſelf, that they are ſo, the refuſal of them will, I ſay, be bitterneſs in the latter end. But their condition is yet far worſe, who as the apoſtle ſpeaks, having known the way of righteouſneſs, are by the power of indwelling ſin turned aſide from the holy commandment. To leave God for the devil, after a man hath made ſome trial of him, and his ſervice; heaven for hell, after a man hath had ſome cheering refreſhing thoughts of it; the fellowſhip of the Saints, for an ale-houſe or a brothel-houſe, after a man hath been admitted into their communion, and taſted of the pleaſantneſs of it; to leave walking in pure, clear, ſtrait paths, to wallow in mire, draughts and filth, this will be for a lamentation. Yet this doth ſin prevail upon apoſtates unto; and that againſt all their light, conviction, experiences, profeſſions, engagements, or whatever may be ſtrong upon them to keep them up to the known ways of righteouſneſs.

4. It evinces its ſtreugth in them by prevailing with them unto a total renunciation of God as revealed in Chriſt, and the power of all goſpel-truth, in the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. I do not now preciſely determine what is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; nor wherein it doth conſiſt. There are different apprehenſions of it; all agree

in this; that by it an end is put to all dealings between God and man in a way of grace. It is a ſin unto death. And this doth the hardneſs and blindneſs of men's hearts bring them to; they are by them at length ſet out of the reach of mercy. They chooſe to have no more to do with God; and God ſwears that they ſhall never enter into his reſt. So ſin brings forth death. A man by it, is brought to renounce the end for which he was made; wilfully to reject the means of his coming to the enjoyment of God, to provoke him to his face; and ſo to periſh in his rebellion.

I have not mentioned theſe things, as though I hoped by them to ſet out to the full the power of indwelling ſin in unregenerate men; only by a few inſtances I thought to give a glimpſe of it. He that would have a fuller view of it, had need only to open his eyes, to take a little view of that wickedneſs which reigneth, yea, rageth all the world over. Let him conſider the prevailing flood of the things mentioned by Paul to be "the fruits of the fleſh," Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. that is, among the ſons of men, in all places, nations, cities, towns, pariſhes; and then let him add thereunto but this one conſideration, that the world is full of the ſteam, filth, and blood of theſe abominations, as to their outward actings of them, is a pleaſant garden, a paradiſe, compared to the heart of man, wherein they are all conceived; and hourly millions of more vile abominations, which being ſtifled in the womb, by ſome of the ways before inſiſted on, they are never able to bring forth to light. Let a man, I ſay, uſing the law for his light and rule, take this courſe, and if he have any ſpiritual diſcerning, he may quickly attain ſatisfaction in this matter.

And I ſhewed in the entrance of this diſcourſe, how this conſideration doth fully confirm the truth propoſed.

CHAP. XVII.

The ſtrength of ſin, evidenced from its reſiſtance unto the power of the law.

THE meaſure of the ſtrength of any perſon, or defenced city, may be well taken from the oppoſition that they are able to withſtand, and not be prevailed againſt. If we hear of a city that hath endured a long ſiege from a potent enemy, and yet is not taken or conquered, whoſe walls have endured great batteries, and are not demoliſhed, though we have never ſeen the place, yet we conclude it ſtrong, if not impregnable.

And this conſideration will alſo evidence the power and ſtrength of indwelling ſin; it is able to hold out, and not only to live, but alſo to ſecure its reign and dominion againſt very ſtrong oppoſition that is made unto it.

I ſhall inſtance only in the oppoſition that is made unto it, by the law, which is oft-times great and terrible, always fruitleſs; all its aſſaults are borne by it, and it is not prevailed againſt. There are ſundry things wherein the law oppoſeth itſelf to ſin, and the power of it. As,

Firſt, It diſcovers it. Sin in the ſoul is like a ſecret hectical diſtemper in the body, its being unknown and unperceived, is one great means of its prevalency, Or, as traitors in a civil ſtate, whilſt they lie hid, they vigorouſly carry on their de-

ſign. The greateſt part of men in the world, know nothing of this ſickneſs, yea death of their ſouls. Though they have been taught ſomewhat of the doctrine of it, yet they know nothing of its power. They know it not ſo, as to deal with it as their mortal enemy. As a man whatever he be told, cannot be ſaid to know that he hath an hectical fever, if he love his life, and ſet not himſelf to ſtop its progreſs.

This then the law doth, it diſcovers this enemy; it convinceth the ſoul that there is ſuch a traitor harbouring in his boſom, "I had not known ſin, but by the law; for I had not known luſt except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet." Rom. vii. 7. I had not known it, that is, fully, clearly diſtinctly. Conſcience will ſomewhat tumultuate about it; but a man cannot know it clearly and diſtinctly from hence. It gives a man ſuch a ſight of it, as the blind man had in the goſpel upon the firſt touch of his eyes, he ſaw men like trees walking, obſcurely, confuſedly; but when the law comes, that gives the ſoul a diſtinct ſight of this indwelling ſin. Again, I had not known it, that is, the depths of it, the root, the habitual inclination of my nature to ſin, which is here called luſt; as it is by James, chap. i. 14. I had not known it, or not known it to be ſin, but by the law.

This then the law doth, it draws out this traitor from its ſecret lurking places, the intimate receſſes of the ſoul. A man, when the law comes, is no more ignorant of his enemy; if he will now periſh by him, it is openly and knowingly; he cannot but ſay, that the law warned him of him, diſcovered him unto him, yea, and raiſed a concourſe about him in the ſoul, of various affections, as an officer doth, that diſcovers a thief or robber, calling out for aſſiſtance to apprehend him.

Secondly, The law not only diſcovers ſin, but diſcovers it to be a very bad inmate, dangerous, yea, pernicious to the ſoul. "Was then that which is good (that is, the law) made death unto me; God forbid. But ſin, that it might appear ſin, working death in me by that which is good, that ſin by the commandment might become exceeding ſinful." Rom. vii. 13. There are many things in this verſe wherein we are not at preſent concerned; that which I only aim at, is the manifeſtation of ſin by the law; it appears to be ſin: and the manifeſtation of it, in its own colours, appears to be exceeding ſinful. The law gives the ſoul to know the filth and guilt of this indwelling ſin, how great they are, how vile it is; what an abomination, what an enmity to God, how hated of him! The ſoul ſhall never more look upon it as a ſmall matter, what thoughts ſoever, it had of it before, whereby it is greatly ſurpriſed.

As a man that finds himſelf ſomewhat diſtempered, ſending for a phyſician of ſkill, when he comes, requires his judgment of his diſtemper. He, conſidering his condition, tells him, alas, I am ſorry for you, the caſe is far otherwiſe with you than you imagine; your diſeaſe is mortal, and it hath proceeded ſo far, preſſing upon your ſpirits, and infecting the whole maſs of your blood, that I doubt, unleſs moſt effectual remedies be uſed, you will live but a very few hours.

So it is in this caſe, a man may have ſome trouble in his mind and conſcience about indwelling ſin; he finds all not well, as it ſhould be with him, more from the effects of ſin, and its continual eruptions, than the nature of it, which he hopes to wreſtle withal: but now, when the law comes, that lets the ſoul know, that its diſeaſe is deadly and mortal, that it is exceeding ſinful,

as being the root and cauſe of all his alienation from God; aud thus alſo the law proceeds againſt it.

Thirdly, The law judgeth the perſon, or lets the ſinner plainly know what he is to expect upon the account of this ſin. This is the law's proper work, its diſcovering property is but preparative to its judging. The law is itſelf, when it is in the throne. Here it minceth not the matter with ſinners, as we uſe to do one with another, but tells us plainly, Thou art the man, in whom this exceeding ſinful ſin doth dwell, and you muſt anſwer for the guilt of it. And this, methinks, if any thing ſhould rouſe up a man to ſet himſelf in oppoſition to it, yea, utterly to deſtroy it. The law lets him know that upon the account of this ſin, he is obnoxious to the curſe and wrath of the great God againſt him; yea, pronounceth the ſentence of everlaſting condemnation upon him upon that account; abide in this ſtate and periſh, is its language. It leaves not the ſoul without this warning in this world, and will leave it without excuſe on that account in the world to come.

Fourthly, The law ſo follows on its ſentence, that it diſquiets and affrights the ſoul, and ſuffers it not to enjoy the leaſt reſt or quietneſs in harbouring its ſinful inmate. Whenever the ſoul hath indulged to its commands, made proviſion for it, immediately the law flies upon it, with the wrath and terror of the Lord, makes it quake and tremble; it ſhall have no reſt, but is like a poor beaſt that hath a deadly arrow ſticking in its ſides, that makes it reſtleſs wherever it is, and whatever it doth.

Fifthly, The law ſtays not here, but alſo it ſlays the ſoul, Rom. vii. 9. that is, by its conviction of the nature, power, and deſert of this indwelling

ſin, it deprives him in whom it is, of all that life of ſelf-righteouſneſs and hope which formerly he ſuſtained himſelf withal: it leaves him a poor, dead, helpleſs, hopeleſs creature. And all this in the purſuit of that oppoſition that it makes againſt this ſin. May we not now expect, that the power of it will be quelled, and its ſtrength broken; that it will die away before thoſe ſtrokes of the law of God; but the truth is, ſuch is its power and ſtrength, that it is quite otherwiſe; like him whom the poets feign to be born of the earth, when one thought to ſlay him by caſting him on the ground, by every fall he recovered new ſtrength, and was more vigorous than formerly: ſo it is with all the falls and repulſes that are given to indwelling ſin by the law. For,

First, It is not conquered. A conqueſt infers two things in reſpect of the conquered: Firſt, loſs of dominion; and, Secondly, loſs of ſtrength. Wherever any one is conquered, he is deſpoiled of both theſe. He loſeth both his authority and his power. So the ſtrong man armed, being prevailed againſt, he is bound, and his goods are ſpoiled. But now, neither of theſe befals indwelling ſin, by the aſſaults of the law; it loſeth not one jot of its dominion nor ſtrength by the all blows that are given unto it. The law cannot do this thing, Rom. viii. 3. it cannot deprive ſin of its power and dominion; for "he that is under the law is alſo under ſin;" that is, whatever power the law gets upon the conſcience of a man, ſo that he fear to ſin, leſt the ſentence and curſe of it ſhould befal him, yet ſin ſtill reigns and rules in his heart. Therefore, ſaith the apoſtle, "Sin ſhall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace;" Rom. vi. 14. intimating plainly, that though a perſon be in never ſo much ſubjection to the authority of the

law, yet that will not exempt and acquit him from the dominion of ſin. Yea, the law by all its work upon the ſoul, inſtead of freeing and acquitting it from the reign of ſin, and bondage unto it, doth accidentally greatly increaſe its miſery and bondage; as the ſentence of the judge on the bench againſt a malefactor adds to his miſery. The ſoul is under the dominion of ſin, and it may be, abides in its woful condition in much ſecurity; fearing neither ſin nor judgment. The law ſetting upon him in this condition by all the ways before mentioned, brings him into great trouble and perplexity, fear, and terror, but delivers him not at all. So that it is with the ſoul, as it was with the Iſraelites when Moſes had delivered his meſſage unto Pharaoh, they were ſo far from getting liberty by it, that their bondage was increaſed, "and they found that they were in a very evil caſe;" Exod. v. 19. yea and we ſhall ſee, that ſin doth like Pharaoh; finding its rule diſturbed, it grows more outrageouſly oppreſſive, and doubles the bondage of their ſouls. This is not then the work of the law to deſtroy ſin, or deprive it of that dominion which it hath by nature.

Nor doth it by all theſe ſtrokes of the law loſe any thing of its ſtrength. It continues both its authority and its force; it is neither deſtroyed, nor weakened. Yea,

Secondly, It is ſo far from being conquered, that it is only enraged. The whole work of the law, doth only provoke and enrage ſin; and cauſe it, as it hath opportunity, to put out its ſtrength with more power and vigour, and force, than formerly. This the Apoſtle ſhews at large, Rom. vii. 9—13.

But you will ſay, do we not ſee it by experience; that many are wrought upon by the preaching of the law to a relinquiſhment of many ſins,

and amendment of their lives, and to a great contending againſt the eruptions of thoſe other corruptions which they cannot yet mortify; and it cannot be denied, but that great is the power and efficacy of the law; when preached and applied to the conſcience in a due manner: I anſwer,

Firſt, It is acknowledged, that very great and effectual is the power of the law of God. Great are the effects that are wrought by it; and it ſhall ſurely accompliſh every end for which of God it is appointed. But yet the ſubduing of ſin, is none of its work; it is not deſigned of God unto that purpoſe; and therefore it is no diſhonour, if it cannot do that which is not its proper work, Rom. viii. 3.

Secondly, Whatever effects it have upon ſome, yet we ſee that in the moſt, ſuch is the power and prevalency of ſin, that it takes no impreſſion at all upon them. May you not ſee every where men living many years in congregations where the law is powerfully preached, and applied unto the conſciences, as to all the ends and purpoſes for which the Lord is pleaſed to make uſe of it, and not once be moved by it; nor receive any more impreſſion from the ſtrokes of it, than blows with a ſtraw would give to an adamant? They are neither convinced by it, nor terrified, nor awed, nor inſtructed, but continue deaf, ignorant, ſenſeleſs, ſecure, as if they had never been told of the guilt of ſin, or terror of the Lord. Such as theſe are congregations full of, who proclaim the triumphing power of ſin, over the diſpenſation of the law.

Thirdly, When any of the effects mentioned are wrought, it is not from the power of the letter of the law, but from the actual efficacy of the Spirit of God, putting forth his virtue and power for that end and purpoſe; and we deny not

but that the Spirit of the Lord is able to reſtrain and quell the power of luſt, when he pleaſeth: and ſome ways, whereby he is pleaſed ſo to do, we have formerly conſidered. But,

Fourthly, Notwithſtanding all that may be obſerved of the power of the law, upon the ſouls of men, yet it is moſt evident, that luſt is not conquered, not ſubdued, nor mortified by it. For,

Firſt, Though the courſe of ſin may be repelled, for a ſeaſon, by the diſpenſation of the law, yet the ſpring and fountain of it is not dried up thereby. Though it withdraws and hides itſelf for a ſeaſon, it is, as I have elſewhere ſhewed, but to ſhift out of a ſtorm, and then to return again. As a traveller, in his way meeting with a violent ſtorm of thunder and rain, immediately turns out of his way, to ſome houſe or tree for his ſhelter; but yet, this cauſeth him not to give over his journey: ſo ſoon as the ſtorm is over, he returns to his way and progreſs again. So it is with men in bondage unto ſin: they are in a courſe of purſuing their luſts; the law meets with them in a ſtorm of thunder and lightning from heaven, terrifies and hinders them in their way; this turns them for a ſeaſon out of their courſe; they will run to prayer, or amendment of life, for ſome ſhelter from the ſtorm of wrath, which they fear is coming upon their conſciences. But is their courſe ſtopped? are their principles altered; not at all. So ſoon as the ſtorm is over, that they begin to wear out that ſenſe, and the terror that was upon them, they return to their former courſe, in the ſervice of ſin again. This was the ſtate with Pharaoh once and again.

Secondly, in ſuch ſeaſons, ſin is not conquered, but diverted. When it ſeems to fall under the power of the law, indeed it is only turned into a new channel, it is not dried up, if you go and ſet

a dam againſt the ſtreams of a river, that you ſuffer no water to paſs in the old courſe and channel, but it breaks out another way, and turns all its ſtreams in a new courſe, you will not ſay, you have dried up that river; though ſome, that come and look into the old channel, may think perhaps that the waters are utterly gone. So it is in this caſe. The ſtreams of ſin, it may be, run in open ſenſuality and profaneneſs; in drunkenneſs and vitiouſneſs; the preaching of the law ſets a dam againſt theſe courſes: conſcience is terrified, and the man dares not walk in the ways wherein he hath been formerly engaged; his companions in ſin, notfinding him in his old ways, begin to laugh at him, as one that is converted, and growing preciſe; profeſſors themſelves begin to be perſuaded, that the work of God is upon his heart, becauſe they ſee his old ſtreams are dried up; but if they have been only a work of the law upon him, there is a dam put to his courſe, but the ſpring of ſin is not dried up, only the ſtreams of it are turned another way. It may be, the man is fallen upon other more ſecret, or more ſpiritual ſins; or, if he be beat from them alſo, the whole ſtrength of luſt and ſin will take up its reſidence in ſelf-righteouſneſs, and pour out, thereby, as filthy ſtreams as in any other way whatever. So that, notwithſtanding the whole work of the law upon the ſouls of men, indwelling ſin will keep alive in them ſtill, which is another evidence of its great power and ſtrength.

I ſhall yet touch upon ſome other evidences of the ſame truth, that I have under conſideration; but I ſhall be brief in them: in the next place then, the great endeavours of men, ignorant of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for the ſubduing and mortifying of ſin, which are all fruitleſs, do evidence the great ſtrength and power of it.

Men who have no ſtrength againſt ſin, may yet be made ſenſible of the ſtrength of ſin. The way whereby for the moſt part, they come to that knowledge, is by ſome previous ſenſe that they have of the guilt of ſin. This men have by the light of their conſciences; they cannot avoid it. This is not a thing in their choice; whether they will or no, they cannot but know ſin to be evil, and that ſuch an evil, that renders them obnoxious to the judgment of God. This galls the minds and conſciences of ſome ſo far, that they are kept in awe, and dare not ſin as they would. Being awed with a ſenſe of the guilt of ſin, and the terror of the Lord, men begin to endeavour to abſtain from ſin, at leaſt from ſuch ſins, as they have been moſt terrified about. While they have this deſign in hand, the ſtrength and power of ſin begins to diſcover itſelf unto them; they begin to find, that there is ſomething in them, that is not in their own power; for, notwithſtanding their reſolutions and purpoſes, they ſin ſtill; and that ſo, or in ſuch a manner, as that their conſciences inform them, that they muſt therefore periſh eternally. This puts them on ſelf endeavours to ſuppreſs the eruption of ſin, becauſe they cannot be quiet, unleſs ſo they do; nor have any reſt or peace within. Now being ignorant of that only way whereby ſin is to be mortified, that is by the Spirit of Chriſt, they fix on many ways, in their own ſtrength, to ſuppreſs it, if not to ſlay it; as being ignorant of that only way whereby conſciences burthened with the guilt of ſin, may be pacified; that is, by the blood of Chriſt; they endeavour by many other ways to accompliſh that end in vain; for no man, by any ſelf-endeavours, can obtain peace with God. Some of the ways whereby they endeavour to ſuppreſs the power of ſin, which caſts them into an unquiet condition, and

their insufficiency for that end, we must look into.

First, They will promise and bind themselves by vows, from those things which they have been most liable unto, and so have been most perplexed withal. The Psalmist shews this to be one great engine whereby false and hypocritical persons do endeavour to extricate and deliver themselves out of trouble and perplexity; they make promises to God, which he calls, "flattering him with the lips," Psal. lxxviii. 36. So it is in this case. Being fresh galled with the guilt of any sin, that by the power of their temptations, they, it may be, have frequently been overtaken in, they vow and promise, that, at least for some such space of time as they will limit, they will not commit that sin again; and this course of proceeding is prescribed unto them, by some who pretend to direct their consciences in this duty. Conscience, by these, now makes them watch over themselves, as to the outward act of the sin that they are galled with; and so it hath one of these two effects, for either they do abstain from it for the time they had prefixed, or they do not; if they do not, as seldom they do, especially if it be a sin that hath a peculiar root in their nature and constitution, and is improved by custom into an habit, if any suitable temptation be presented unto them; their sin is increased, and therewith their terror, and they are wofully discouraged in making any opposition to sin; and therefore, for the most part, after one or two vain attempts, or more, it may be, knowing no other way to mortify sin, but this of vowing against it; and keeping of that vow in their own strength, they give over all contests, and become wholly the servants of sin, being bounded only by outward considerations, without any serious endeavours for a recovery. Or, Secondly,

Suppoſe that they have ſucceſs in their reſolutions, and do abſtain from actual ſins, their appointed ſeaſon; commonly one of theſe two things enſue; either they think they have well diſcharged their duty, and ſo may a little now, at leaſt for a ſeaſon, indulge to their corruptions and luſts, and ſo are entangled again in the ſame ſnares of ſin as formerly: or elſe, they reckon that their vow and promiſe hath preſerved them, and ſo ſacrifice to their own net and drag; ſetting up a righteouſneſs of their own, againſt the grace of God; which is ſo far from weakening indwelling ſin, that it ſtrengthens it, in the root and principle, that it may hereafter reign in the ſoul in ſecurity. Or, at the moſt, the beſt ſucceſs that can be imagined unto this way of dealing with ſin, is but the reſtraining of ſome outward eruptions of it, which tends nothing to the weakening of its power; and therefore, ſuch perſons, by all their endeavours, are very far from being freed from the inward toiling, burning, diſquieting, perplexing power of ſin. And this is the ſtate of moſt men that are kept in bondage under the power of conviction; hell, death, and the wrath of God, are continually preſented unto their conſciences; this makes them labour with all their ſtrength againſt that ſin which moſt enrageth their conſciences, and moſt increaſeth their fears; that is the actual eruption of it; for, for the moſt part, while they are freed from that, they are ſafe; though in the mean time, ſin lies tumultuating in and defiling of the heart continually. As with running ſores; outward repelling medicines may ſkin them over, and hinder their corruption from coming forth; but the iſſue of them is, that they cauſe them to feſter inwardly, and ſo prove, though it may be not ſo noiſome and offenſive as they were before, yet far more dangerous. So is it

with this repelling of the power of corruption, by men's vows, and promiſes againſt it; external eruptions are, it may be, reſtrained for a ſeaſon; but the inward root and principle is not weakened in the leaſt. And moſt commonly this is the iſſue of this way; that ſin have gotten more ſtrength, and being enraged by its reſtraint, breaks all its bounds, and captivates the ſoul unto all filthy abominations; which is the principle, as was before obſerved, of moſt of the viſible apoſtaſies which we have in the world, 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20.

The Holy Ghoſt compares ſinners, becauſe of the odious, fierce, poiſonous nature of this indwelling ſin, unto lions, bears, and aſps, Iſa. xi. 6—9. Now this is the excellency of goſpel-grace, that it changes the nature and inward principles of theſe otherwiſe, paſſionate untamed beaſts; making the wolf as the kid, the lion as the lamb, and the bear as the cow. When this is effected, they may ſafely be truſted in; a little child may lead them: but theſe ſelf-endeavours do not at all change the nature, but reſtrain their outward violence: he that takes a lion, or a wolf, and ſhuts him up from ravening, whilſt yet his inward violence remains, may well expect that at one time or other, they will break their bonds and fall to their former ways of rapine and violence. However, ſhutting them up, doth not, as we ſee, change their natures, but only reſtrain their rage from doing open ſpoil. So it is in this caſe; it is grace alone that changeth the heart, and takes away that poiſon and fierceneſs that is in them by nature; men's ſelf-endeavours do but coerce them as to ſome outward eruptions.

Secondly, Beyond bare vows and promiſes, with ſome watchfulneſs to obſerve them in a rational uſe of ordinary means, men have put, and ſome do yet put themſelves on extraordinary ways

of mortifying ſin. This is the foundation of all that hath a ſhew of wiſdom and religion in the papacy; their hours of prayer, faſtings, their immuring and cloyſtering themſelves, their pilgrimages, penances, and ſelf-torturing diſcipline, ſpring all from this root. I ſhall not ſpeak of the innumerable evils that have attended theſe ſelf-invented ways of mortification, and how they all of them have been turned into means, occaſions, and advantages of ſinning; nor of the horrible hypocriſy which evidently cleaves unto the moſt of their obſervers; nor of that ſuperſtition which gives life to them all, being a thing riveted in the natures of ſome, and their conſtitutions, fixed on others by inveterate prejudices; and the ſame by others taken up for ſecular advantages; but I will ſuppoſe the beſt that can be made of it, and it will be found to be a ſelf-invented deſign of men ignorant of the righteouſneſs of God, to give a check to this power of indwelling ſin whereof we ſpeak. And it is almoſt incredible, what fearful ſelf-macerations and horrible ſufferings, this deſign hath carried men out unto. And undoubtedly their blind zeal and ſuperſtition will riſe in judgment, and condemn the horrible ſloth and negligence of the moſt of them to whom the Lord hath granted the ſaving light of the goſpel. But what is the end of theſe things? The apoſtle in brief gives us an account; "They attain not the righteouſneſs aimed at," Rom. ix. 31, 32; they come not up unto a conformity to the law; ſin is not mortified; no, nor the power of it weakened; but what it loſeth in ſenſual, in carnal pleaſures, it takes up, with great advantage, in blindneſs, darkneſs, ſuperſtition, ſelf-righteouſneſs, and ſoul-pride, contempt of the goſpel, and the righteouſneſs of it, and reigns no leſs than in the moſt profligate ſinners in the world.

Laſtly, The ſtrength, efficacy and power of this law of ſin, may be farther evidenced from its life and in-being in the ſoul, notwithſtanding the wound that is given unto it, in the firſt converſion of the ſoul to God; and the continual oppoſition that is made unto it by grace. But this is the ſubject and deſign of another endeavour.

It may now be expected, that we ſhould here add the ſpecial uſes of all this diſcovery that hath been made of the power, deceit, prevalency, and ſucceſs, of this great adverſary of our ſouls. But as for what concerns that humility, ſelf-abaſement, watchfulneſs, diligence, and application unto the Lord Chriſt for relief, which will become thoſe who find in themſelves by experience the power of this law of ſin, have been occaſionally mentioned and inculcated through the whole preceding diſcourſe; ſo for what concerns the actual mortification of it, I ſhall only recommend unto the reader, for his direction, another ſmall treatiſe written long ſince unto that purpoſe, which I ſuppoſe he may do well to conſider together with this, if he find theſe things to be his concernment.

To the only wiſe God our Saviour, be glory and majeſty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FORMER EDITIONS.

THE religious world has long been acquainted with the character and writings of the reverend and learned Dr. JOHN OWEN, the author of the foregoing treatiſe on indwelling ſin, and therefore any recommendation from us of the works of that great man, may be altogether unneceſſary; but nevertheleſs, as the publiſher has deſired this at our hands, we take the liberty of giving this public atteſtation of our value for the abovementioned treatiſe, and that we eſteem it highly worthy of the peruſal of all chriſtians: at the ſame time, uniting in our earneſt prayers that, as it has been long of eminent ſervice to the church of GOD, it may ſtill be rendered more extenſively uſeful, eſpecially among the riſing generation.

SAMUEL STENNETT, D. D.
JOHN STAFFORD.
ABRAHAM BOOTH.
BENJAMIN WALLIN.
JOHN CONDER, D. D.
JAMES WEBB.

To the above recommendation it may not be improper to add the teſtimony of the late reverend and pious Mr. JAMES HERVEY, who, in his Theron and Aſpaſio, Dialogue XIV. ſpeaking of the foregoing treatiſe, thus expreſſes himſelf:

"THE author's pen is indeed a diſſecting knife, "goes deep into his ſubject, and lays open this plague "of the heart. Like a workman that need not be "aſhamed, he demonſtrates his point from the unerring "word of God, and the acknowledged experience of "chriſtians. Like a compaſſionate, as well as able "phyſician, he all along preſcribes the proper antidote; "nay, he ſhews how the poiſon may be ſo over-ruled "by divine grace, and ſo managed by the watchful pa-"tient, as to become medicinal, ſalutary, and conducive "to the moſt beneficial purpoſes."

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